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THE HAYMAKERS.

BY NATHAN D. URNER.

The sun beats down with a blinding glare,
But a breeze on the meadow is up and away,
Fanning the brows of the reapers there,
And whirling the scent of the new-mown hay,
As, following on in the reapers' paths,
The boys and girls of the homestead come,
And in broad, free windrows toss the swaths,
With jocund shouts of the Harvest Home.

From a nook secluded I snuff the breeze,
And hear the voices merry and blithe,
And watch, through the rifts among the trees,
The shifting gleams of the sweeping scythe;
And dreamily number the years that have gone
Since I, with a sweetheart now no more,
Merrily followed the reapers on
Through haying fields in harvests of yore.

Her face was the fairest in all the field,
Her form like a fay's in its gentle grace,
Her smile like the sunshine that sleeps on a shield,
And her voice the music of time and place.
There was nothing but pride in my boyish breast,
As she tossed the hay by my side in the sun;
And nothing but love when we paused to rest,
Or wandered home as the day was done.

There is one just like her out there in the glow—
The girl with the rose in her broad-brimmed hat—
Ah, no! *she* would not have blundered so—
My Nelly would never have tossed like that.
Her step was free as the forest fawn's,
Her hand like a flash with fork or rake;
And the dandelions that decked the lawns
Were brighter and fairer for her dear sake.

The flowers have blossomed this many a year
O'er a gentle grave on the hill that I know,
And I am a sad-eyed dreamer here,
With my thoughts afar in the long ago.
But I live it again in the rare, rich smell
Of the new-moon hay, and the shouts that come
From the haying fields are hopeful, and tell
Of the quiet and peace of the Harvest Home.

The Plot Against Hawley;

OR, THE

PRISONER OF DESOLATION.

By LEON LEWIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE BOY MAGICIAN," "RED KNIFE," "THE BROKEN HOME," "EDDY'S SEARCH," "THE CLUB-FOOT BEAR," "MARK HEBER'S LUCK," ETC.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CROWDED RETIREMENT.

In approaching the *Dower*, Will. Hawley had waded in the edge of the water, it will be remembered, so as to avoid disturbing the thousands of marine birds roosting upon the sandy beaches.

He now did likewise, in departing from the doomed ship, and Capt. Dougal imitated his example.

Not a word escaped either of the two men until they reached the rising ground to the southward of the head of the harbor, in the direct way to the madman's cabin, as previously mentioned.

But here, finding concealment in the inequalities of the ground, even more than in the distance separating them from their enemies, they slackened their footsteps, and resumed the exchange of their ideas with each other.

The island was still as lone and solitary as ever, the darkness as grim and intense, the air as chilly, the silence as profound, save that a strange roaring and crackling covered the *Dower*, save that a fierce heat was arising from her hold, save that a vivid gleam was now lighting up her deck and rigging and the surrounding waters!

"She's fairly ablaze now," murmured Hawley, halting and looking back.

"It sickens me to see her going—the good old ship in which I have plowed the seas so long," returned Dougal. "It's a serious loss to me, as well as to her owners."

"Let us hope that the man-of-war spoken of by her two incendiaries is near enough to see the conflagration, and that he will soon take vengeance for it."

"Whether the war vessel is near us or not," said Dougal, "there is at least one pleasant thought in the matter, and that is, that the runaways will not have the least knowledge of our existence near them, since I am supposed to be burning up with the ship, and especially since they have not yet received the first hint of your presence, or of that of the madman."

"There is still another pleasant thought in the case—that you have escaped!" said Hawley feelingly. "And now let's hurry forward to the madman's cabin, before he becomes alarmed at my prolonged absence, or terrified by the sight of the burning ship."

"Agreed," said Dougal, as they resumed their way. "The first thing we need is something to eat. I am all in a chill, as well as hungry."

"You are worse off than I am in one respect. Your clothes are all wet, while my coat and vest and shirt—all I left in the boat, in fact, when I swam off to the *Dower*—are as dry and comfortable as can be. I have not yet made the acquaintance of our madman's larder, but I dare say he has a good supper awaiting me at this moment. By the way, Captain Dougal, you had better treat the madman as I do—just as if he were Napoleon. He has been here a long time, knows every nook and corner of this end of the island, has all the essentials of existence at command, and will doubtless be a great help to us."

"He is intelligent?"

"Yes. I think he had a good education in his youth, and before turning to the wild life that he has since led. At any rate, he has read a great deal, and is especially familiar with all that relates to Napoleon and St. Helena. It's fortunate for me that I understand French, and that I have read many works in the language during my long voyages, or I shouldn't be able to carry on the *role* the madman has assigned me—that of Prime Minister. I have already drawn up, in the necessary Napoleonic form, a decree expelling that other madman from St. Helena."

"All right, Mr. Hawley. I will model my conduct after yours in all my dealings with this poor fellow," said Dougal. "How curious it is about that second madman—the one that assaulted you! We must be on our guard against him, at the same time that we try to get a glimpse of him."

The couple had advanced but a few rods further, when a voice suddenly broke the silence:

"Ho, ho! Are you there, Admiral?"

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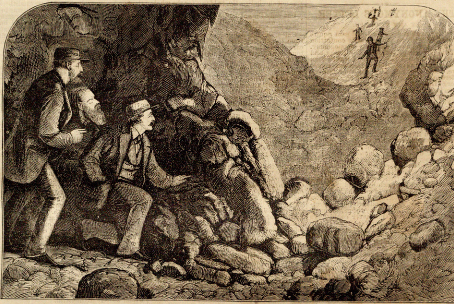

THE CONVICTS ENTERING THE GROTTO.

"Yes, here I am, sire," returned Will., motioning Dougal to halt. "Your majesty has come here to meet me?"

"As you see, my dear Minister. The truth is, you stayed longer than I expected, and I got nervous. I began to think I'd been imposed upon—"

"How imposed upon?"

"Why, that you'd turn out a phantom—like so many of the people I've seen at St. Helena."

The madman had continued to advance, as had our hero, so that the couple soon met. The poor fellow's delight was great at seeing Will. again, as was shown by his long sigh of relief.

"Art well and safe, my dear Admiral?" he demanded, offering his hand.

"As usual, sire."

"Hast learned who and what are these mysterious invaders?"

"I have, sire. They are runaway convicts from the Swan River colony."

"Swan River! I've never had any such troops, never!"

"I should hope not, sire. They are rascals of the worst description. The ship, however, has been an honest trader, and I found an honest man aboard of her, her late commander, Captain Dougal, who had been taken prisoner by the runaways and very cruelly treated. He has lost no time in coming with me to pay his respects to your majesty—"

"Indeed! Where is he?"

"A few rods only behind me, waiting your majesty's permission to approach—"

"Why, hasten to call him. He is a fellow-being in distress, from all you tell me. I long to see him."

Will. lost no time in calling and introducing Dougal, and a pleasant interview succeeded. The madman was pleased with the deference paid to him, and Dougal was equally pleased to find his new acquaintance so good-natured.

"If you please, sire," said Will., after a brief, rambling conversation, "I wish to recommend Captain Dougal for a high post near your majesty. I would like him to rank as a Marshal of the Empire—"

"Not a word more, Admiral. Marshal of the Empire he shall be from this moment. I salute you, Marshal Dougal, and welcome you proudly to my service. Ho, ho! I can have my sovereign will in this thing, it seems, if I cannot have it in all others."

"I am glad you receive the Marshal so nobly, sire," said Will., looking over his shoulder at the white glare which had now appeared above the crests of the hills behind which the trio had passed. "The truth is, the Marshal has been very unfortunate. These runaways intended to take his life—"

"The villains!" ejaculated the madman, looking protectingly at his new official.

"And they have plundered his ship, and have even set it afire! Your Majesty sees yonder glow. It is that of the Marshal's ship."

The madman was horror-stricken.

"Can they be such wretches?" he murmured.

"We shall soon see the whole work of destruction as we near the cabin," said Hawley. "Ah! we can see it now! A savage piece of business! We look to your Majesty for protection. The glorious sword of Austerlitz must defend us—"

"It shall! it shall!" affirmed the madman, as he flourished his cutlass. "The Marshal shall take the field against these invaders at once. Fortunately he knows them—"

"And your majesty, still more fortunately, knows all the secret nooks of this end of the island, if we should be compelled to evacuate our present quarters."

"Yes, I do—if the case should turn out as bad as that. There is a grotto here that was built for my use by Jupiter the very night he built my cabin. I have often walked in its deep recesses, when nervous about being intruded upon."

"The very thing," said Will.

"But let us have supper first," proposed the madman, turning his back upon the flaming ship, which was now lighting up the whole head of the bay and the adjacent shores. "Since those Swan River rascals have behaved in this villainous manner, we must console ourselves in any way we can. The first point is supper, which is already upon the table. In the absence of my late retinue of domestics, I have cooked it myself."

Will. and Dougal expressed their satisfaction at this announcement, and the madman led the way briskly to his dwelling.

The repast proved better than either of the guests expected. The madman had caught, with infinite pains, during the preceding forenoon, a couple of fish about the size of a small haddock, and these had been fried. The choice portions of several young ducks had received similar preparation. A plate of the cabbages peculiar to the island had been boiled in salt water. The cooking had been achieved with a turf that covers a large portion of the island, and which, after being dried, makes very good fuel.

The supper finished, the madman lay down to sleep, upon the pressing recommendation of his officials, who then sauntered forth to a neighboring hill-top, to take a last view of the burning vessel.

A few only of the runaways were visible upon the shore, and these betrayed no excitement, the destruction of the ship being evidently taken by them as a matter of course.

Satisfied that everything would remain quiet during the night, on the part of the run-aways, Will. and Dougal returned to the cabin.

The madman was sound asleep.

"We had better imitate his example," said Will. "I am tired as a dog."

"And so am I—utterly exhausted," returned Dougal. "You think it is safe for us all to go to sleep?"

"Yes. At any rate we must take the risk, in view of the greater risks of to-morrow."

They accordingly disposed of themselves as comfortably as they could, and were soon lost to all their troubles in a profound slumber.

The madman was the first to awake in the morning, and he had a warm breakfast ready by the time Will. awoke, and also awoke his companion. "His majesty" had done his cooking before it was fairly daylight, so that his smoke would not be discovered by the runaways, but the morning was so foggy that it would have taken a smoke like that of a burning ship to become visible in or upon it.

After breakfast, the trio sallied forth to the crest of a hill, and looked toward the head of the harbor.

A few traces of a charred hull were visible above the incoming tide.

The runaways were flying about, busily engaged in getting their breakfast.

Will. observed them attentively.

"It's impossible for us to stay where we are," he said. "These men will scatter all along the shore this morning, take possession of the hut, and hunt us as they would hunt wolves, if they once get an eye upon us."

"Then what are we to do?"

"We had better remove everything we can from the hut to the grotto spoken of by 'his majesty,' and take up our quarters in this new hiding-place."

The measure was discussed at length, and unanimously adopted.

Within two hours thereafter the change of base had been effected.

The grotto in question was really a wonderful place, covering a vast extent of space, and being approached only by a narrow path along the bottom of a deep gully, in which was a small stream of water. It was situated about a mile from the head of Christmas Harbor, in the interior of the island.

Will. and Dougal felt quite safe in it.

They were just congratulating themselves upon having retreated in time, and upon having found such a safe hiding-place, when they heard voices near the entrance of the gully leading to the grotto.

"Heavens! what's that?" murmured Will.

"The runaways, I think," said Dougal.

"They're looking for us, eh?" exclaimed the madman. "Ho, ho! We must hide."

He hastened to stow himself away in one of the innermost recesses of the grotto, and his companions did likewise, taking care to conceal in various nooks all the effects they had brought from the cabin.

The voices which had alarmed the fugitives continued to be heard several minutes, all the time sounding nearer and nearer, and at last a light, quick step resounded at the narrow entrance of the grotto, and a slight, wiry figure came briskly into view.

The light of the outer world reached the grotto in sufficient quantity for the watchers to see this man distinctly.

"It's Fisty Bantam," breathed Dougal to our hero, with a shudder of horror.

The name fitted the man perfectly. His very diminutive size accounted for the last half of it, and his fierce air, his pugnacious angularity of movement and regard, rendered the first half of his soubriquet singularly appropriate.

He was armed as became a desperado of his position and renown.

"This way, lads!" he called, in a shrill, but piercing voice.

A scramble of footsteps was heard in the gully without, and then came a second intruder, who was followed by a third, and in a few moments more a crowd of desperadoes came swarming into the grotto pellmell, with noisy exclamations of wondering interest.

"The whole gang's here," added Dougal. "We are caught, Hawley! Bantam has evidently had some previous knowledge of this place, as strange as the fact seems. And he and all his men are now between us and freedom."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. AYMAR HOMEWARD BOUND.

Between the islands of Desolation and Madagascar, but well up toward the latter, in the depths of the Indian Ocean, a large Indiaman—the *Petrel*, from Calcutta for New York—was advancing toward port. Her starboard watch, some fourteen or sixteen men, were at their posts along the deck, with that deep silence, that fixed attention, which attests a breathless excitement. The wind was blowing stiffly from the west, bringing a heavy sea, and the ship was on the port tack, carrying every stitch of her canvas, with the exception of her flying-jib, studding sails and royals. The time was early morning—soon after sunrise—on the 30th of February, 1853.

In this posture of affairs the commander of the *Petrel* suddenly emerged from the cabin.

He was a fine specimen of the American merchant captain—snugly built, fine looking, good-hearted, noble and intelligent. He was under five and thirty years of age, but had been commander several years, having followed the sea from his boyhood, and so earned early and rapid promotion. His name was Barry Graham. He owned a fifth of the vessel and cargo.

One quick, sharp glance shot Capt. Graham into the cloud of canvas above him, and then he recoiled abruptly, a look of pain convulsing his features.

"Mr. Sterling!" he called sternly.

"Here, sir!" and the first mate advanced, glass in hand, from the weather main shrouds, where he had been scanning the waters.

He was vigorously robust, but rather thick than tall, having a powerful chest and immensely broad shoulders. His face was rugged, his long hair and beard grizzly, his whole exterior grimly swarthy, and yet he looked kindly. A trident in his hand would have made him the living image of Old Neptune.

"You are carrying too much sail, Mr. Sterling, for this weather," continued Captain Graham. "You'll have your topmasts out of her."

"I hope not, sir," rejoined Sterling. "Thus far, I haven't so much as started a sheet or a bolt-rope. The beauty!"

His eyes lit up admiringly, as he cast a swift glance alow and aloft; and well did the ship deserve his admiration, towering up so stately and beautiful—a moving world upon the waters!

"And as to carrying too much sail, Captain Graham," resumed Sterling, "I think you will soon agree that I have chosen the least of our two perils."

These words were spoken with an emphasis that startled the hearer.

"Our two perils?" the commander repeated. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that I am not carrying all this sail for nothing," replied Sterling, passing the glass to his superior and waving his hand aft. "*There is a pirate in our wake!*"

The reader need only recall what terrible pirates ravaged the East Indies at that day, to realize the effect of this announcement upon Capt. Graham.

"A pirate!" he cried. "Is it possible?"

Stepping to the nearest shrouds, he raised his glass to his eye, and sent his gaze back upon the ship's wake until it reached the far horizon, where it fluttered a moment searchingly.

"A sail, sure enough!" he exclaimed. "You have made her out, I suppose? She's a fore-and-aft schooner!"

"Yes, a schooner!" echoed Sterling. "swift as a race-horse, carrying a hundred or more cut-throats, and mounting a bow-chaser, no doubt. She has all the bad points and manners of her breed."

At the distance from which she was seen, being hull down astern, the menacing stranger appeared a mere speck upon the ocean, scarcely larger than a sea-bird's wing, but the light in the eastern sky revealed her with startling distinctness.

"She was a top-sail schooner an hour since, when I first saw her," proceeded the mate. "She had a square top-sail and a square top-gallant-sail above her foresail. She has changed her rig, you see, with a view to run us down quickly. Her fore-and-aft sails are much better, on this tack, than her square sails. She was coming for us when I first discovered her. She must have seen us at daybreak.

The commander's face worked anxiously.

"But she may have been standing on this course before she saw us?" he suggested, loath to accept his officer's conclusions. "How do you know that she's a pirate?"

"In many ways," replied Sterling. "She has changed her course repeatedly, several points at a time, whenever we have done so. This fact shows that she is *chasing us*. Again, she is carrying all sail, which no honest ship *would* do, in the wind that's blowing. She has changed her rig, the better to run us down, and this in the face of a probable tempest. Finally, she must carry a perfect swarm of men to have changed her rig in this wind during the last thirty minutes."

These evidences were staggering—decisive. A tremor—a stifling thrill, such as all men feel at the advent of a mortal danger—shook the form of Captain Graham.

"You are right," he said simply. "She's a pirate!"

Like gleams of lightning ran his glances over the sea, the sky, the bellying sails, the laboring masts and yards, which seemed to fly whirling through space, at every plunge and roll of the vessel.

"And a storm is upon us," he added.

"As sure as fate!" returned Sterling. "I foresaw it, just after you turned in, and sent down the royals, with their yards and masts, and took in the flying-jib."

"We are thus between two dangers, as you said: a tempest before us, and a pirate behind us!"

"It's a horrible situation."

"And the pirate is gaining?"

"Rapidly."

"The wind is freshening, the sea rising, from one moment to another."

"Beyond question."

"Thus the *Petrel* is doubly endangered: exposed to the storm! exposed to the pirate!"

The voice of Captain Graham died away in an exclamation resembling a groan, as he again cast rapid glances around him, and Sterling hastened to improve the opportunity thus afforded him of rousing out the larboard watch from the forecastle.

A quick snapping, a wild flutter succeeded. The mizzen top-gallant-sail had been blown clean from the bolt-ropes, and was flying away hundreds of fathoms to the leeward.

Clearly an awful hour had come.

The ship must shorten sail, and that instantly; there was no help for that. And yet, even as she was now going, she was being overhauled rapidly by the terrible pursuer.

A more trying situation than that thus forced upon Captain Graham is seldom encountered.

For nearly a minute, with his muscles all drawn rigid, with a strange pallor on his face, he clung breathlessly to the nearest shrouds, casting alternate glances at the pursuer and at the scene—now so wild and menacing—immediately around him.

Then a fierce cracking, as of ten thousand whips, resounded high above the roar of the wind and the sea.

The mizzen top-sail had been split directly through the middle, from its head to its foot.

The commander groaned in his anguish.

"I cannot carry away everything," he muttered, "Nor drive the ship under. Our first duty is here!"

Then he took his decision.

"Stand by to shorten sail!" rang out his voice, with the clearness of a trumpet. "Down with those top-gallant-sails—both of them! In with that mizzen top-sail! Close reef the fore and main top-sails. In with that main course! Down with that spanker. With a will, all of you! Lively!"

The men sprang to their work with the energy inspired by the danger, and executed all the orders of their commander, in rapid succession, under the keen eyes of Sterling, when the ship labored less heavily, but also advanced much less rapidly than before.

"We did not ease her a minute too soon,' said Capt. Graham, when the mate was again beside him. "Look at that sea! The wind is freshening rapidly. I believe that a hard gale is before us. We ought to be hove to, at this very minute, upon the starboard tack, under a close-reefed main top-sail and stay-sail. And yet—"

Hesitating, he again looked through his glass at the pursuer, steadying himself against the weather mizzen shrouds.

"And yet we cannot," finished the commander, with a sigh. "That blood-hound is too near us! In half or three-quarters of an hour he would have us under his guns!"

A long silence followed, the two men frequently shifting their positions uneasily, but continuing to watch their ship, the pursuer, the sea and the heavens.

The morning had dawned dismally, with a pall of clouds in the sky well in keeping with the fierce wind that swept the face of the deep. The sun had long since risen, as was shown clearly enough by the gray gleams peering up from the dark caverns of the eastern horizon; but the little light thus thrown upon the scene barely sufficed to show its desolation. Low down in the southern board, and following the line of the sea and sky around to the westward, was a bank of clouds, black and broken, and every instant rising and spreading, like smoke from the crater of a volcano.

"There's trouble in that quarter," observed the commander, indicating the cloud bank.

"I fear so, sir," assented Sterling.

"And the wind is blowing a gale already. As slow as we are going, we must go slower. You had better take in your fore course and your fore stay-sail. We must keep as near to the wind as possible, or these heavy seas will knock us to pieces!"

At this instant, as Sterling proceeded to shorten sail further, a noble and strangely commanding face showed itself at the entrance of the cabin, and a pair of keen, calm eyes looked forth upon the busy scene the deck of the *Petrel* presented.

"The Rajah!" murmured a passing sailor, to a comrade.

"The great merchant, Mr. Aymar—Mr. Thomas Aymar of Calcutta," said another.

"They say, Bill," whispered a third, "that Mr. Aymar has a million dollars aboard of this here vessel."

The object of these remarks was indeed Mr. Thomas Aymar, the uncle of Mrs. Hawley. It was upon the *Petrel* that he had taken passage for New York, in accordance with the letter he had written to his niece, and which Capt. Pedder had so unscrupulously intercepted and destroyed.

The age of Mr. Aymar was not far from fifty years. The hot Indian sun had bronzed his complexion to a rich olive. His form was a model of elegance, and yet singularly full of strength and agility. His features were rarely harmonious and handsome. His whole aspect was that of one who has fought a great battle with the world and conquered. The high, thoughtful brow, the firm lips, the frank, direct gaze—everything, in short, in his appearance and manners proclaimed one of those highly cultured spirits which are to be found only in the innermost temples of Manhood.

He was dressed in a half-oriental fashion, and wore upon his head a closely fitting red cap, of a circular form, that was richly ornamented with gold and silver thread, and without tassels.

As he stepped upon the deck, drawing a long cloak gracefully around his tall, commanding figure, the murmur of interest with which his coming had been saluted, continued.

"You had better stay in the cabin, Mr. Aymar, had you not, sir?" said Capt. Graham, advancing to the side of his principal passenger. "You will be blown away here—"

"Perhaps you mean that I will be in the way, my dear Captain," smiled Mr. Aymar.

"Oh, not at all, sir."

"Then I will look about a few moments, seeing that I can take care of myself, and that I am greatly interested in all that is occurring," observed Mr. Aymar. "You seem to be having a lively time, sir."

"And so we are, Mr. Aymar," acknowledged Capt. Graham, with a voice and countenance freighted with anxiety. "We are in trouble, sir. A gale is impending, I am certain."

"But there is something worse here than an impending gale, Captain," said Mr. Aymar, glancing at the serious faces around him. "You are pale, wild, haggard! There is surely some peril that you are keeping from me."

The commander looked at his passenger fixedly a moment, and then drew him back to the shelter of the companion-way.

"Who is it that is pursuing us?" Mr. Aymar proceeded. "Who is it that has forced you to carry so much sail? You need not fear to tell me. I am not a child, after all my voyages—after my twenty years in India—after all my experiences by sea and by land!"

"You have heard then—"

"Enough to know that we have a pursuer. Your very canvas proclaims the fact."

Capt. Graham regarded the grand, calm face before him another moment, with an emotion that caused his stout frame to tremble.

"I will be frank with you, Mr. Aymar," he then said. "You have a great interest in knowing the truth. Besides, as things are going, I could not long keep the truth from you. We are being chased by a pirate!"

Mr. Aymar recoiled in silent horror.

"It is a most disagreeable duty for me to tell you this," added the commander. "I cannot forget that you have been chased by a pirate before; that your proposed return to America, ten years ago, was interrupted by a pirate, who captured the *Hornet*, and that you lost your vast fortune of a million of dollars upon that memorable occasion. I shrank, therefore, from telling you that your voyage and your fortune are again threatened by the same peril that has already cost you so dearly."

"This is a strange fatality!" murmured Mr. Aymar, who had taken the commander's proffered glass, and looked at the pursuer. "You are correctly informed, I see, Captain, about my adventures of ten years ago. The pirates took my million, and slipped away to the island of Desolation, where, as is believed, they were all killed by several government cruisers who pursued them thither, but nothing was ever heard or seen of my money. It was a total loss."

At this moment Mr. Sterling drew near the couple. He had heard enough of the preceding conversation to know that Mr. Aymar had been informed by Capt. Graham of the pursuit.

"The hull of the schooner is now becoming visible," said Sterling. "It is painted black—as black as the hearts upon it. I can even see the swarming ruffians upon her deck. You have heard, Mr. Aymar, no doubt, of the Malay Gunner?"

"The terrible pirate?" returned Mr. Aymar. "Yes, I have heard only too much about him, of course. But why this inquiry? Surely you cannot mean that this fellow astern—"

A profound sigh broke from the stern old sea-dog as the passenger hesitated.

"You have guessed my meaning, sir," he declared. "I believe—I almost know that the pirate behind us is the Malay Gunner!"

Mr. Aymar was naturally startled at this announcement, although in no way dismayed.

"But can it be," he asked, "that the Malay Gunner ventures so far to the south and west as this?"

"Certainly," answered Sterling. "He has been pretty thoroughly hunted in the Straits of Malacca, where he first became known, and has lately taken to this very latitude. And I am sure, from the manœuvres of this fellow astern, that he is no other than the Malay Gunner. He evidently guesses what we are, and where we are from. He scents our silks and other treasures, and is resolved to have them."

"If your suspicion is correct, Mr. Sterling," said Mr. Aymar, "we have lively times before us."

"Yes, sir. Only some lucky chance can save us. Fact is, sir, those guns tell the story."

"The guns!"

"The two large cannons he carries, on circular carriages—the one on his bow, and the other astern. It was from those guns, while cruising in the Straits of Malacca—his principal haunt for so many years—that he received his strange and terrible name. He is indeed a *gunner!* the fiendish hunter of the ocean! Once under those guns, the *Petrel* would be no safer than our long-boat. Let him once overhaul us, and he can do with us what he will!"

"But can he overhaul us?"

Before replying, Mr. Sterling stepped to the weather bulwarks, and looked again through his glass at the pursuer.

"She's coming like a bullet!" he then said, the pallor of his face deepening. "Don't you think so, Captain?"

The commander looked at the schooner long and steadily, shaking his head gloomily.

"She's going faster than ever!" he declared emphatically. "She's gaining at least three knots an hour upon us."

"Then she will overhaul us!" murmured Mr. Aymar.

Capt. Graham drew a sigh that came from the very depths of his soul.

"I hope not—I pray not," he answered. "Let us hope that she will carry away her topmasts—that something in our favor will happen. 'Twere better for our lady passengers to be at the bottom of the ocean, than to come under the gaze of the Malay Gunner! Death is nothing to the fate that awaits a helpless woman in his hands!"

The face of Mr. Aymar attested that he felt all the gravity of the situation.

"I remember a thousand horrors that have been told me concerning that terrible man," he remarked. "How he has burned or scuttled scores of ships; how he has plundered every ship, and murdered every crew that has fallen in his way; how, in short, he has been, for several years past, the scourge of the East Indies!"

A loud cry of joy came from Mr. Sterling, who had continued to watch the pirate.

"He has carried away his top-sails!" he cried. "They've gone to keep our mizzen top-sail company."

The commander and Mr. Aymar echoed the mate's rejoicings.

"But he's bending others," soon added Mr. Sterling lugubriously. "I see his men swarming aloft. What does he care for a few sails more or less? God help us! he is coming on like a fury."

"And see! His bow-chaser salutes us," exclaimed Capt. Graham, as a wreath of smoke swept up from the schooner's forecastle.

"And there goes his flag to the fore," cried the mate, handing the glass to the captain. "It is what we expected. The black flag of the ocean! with its white skull and cross-bones!"

"And this fiend of the sea will soon overtake us!" murmured Capt. Graham. "He will plunder and burn the ship. He will take us prisoners. He will make us walk the plank, or kill us on the spot. Horrible! Horrible!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER.

BY AMY RANDOLPH.

"There can't nobody fool *me*," said Squire Dapplebee, with an indescribable contortion of his parchment-colored physiognomy. "Them city chaps is full o' their tricks and traps, but I guess they'll find I wasn't born yesterday. And if Henry Darrock comes here, niece Deborah, I've got your father's orders to fall back upon: he sha'n't see you! George Dapplebee knew what he was about, when he sent you out here to keep you out of the way of the ravening wolves and foxes."

"Yes; but, Uncle Dapplebee—"

"No, you don't, my dear," said the Squire, slowly rolling his head round and round within a stiff white wall of shirt collar, and closing one eye in a wink. "*Buts* an't no go here, as you'll find out before you've been at Dapplebee farm a week."

Deborah Dapplebee bit her lip, and bent lower over her sewing, a bit of snowy cambric ruffling, without trusting herself to reply to this piece of oracular wisdom. She was a pretty, trim little brunette, with shining black hair parted across a broad, low brow, great liquid brown eyes, and the archest of dainty pug noses—a girl who knew the artistic effects of color, and delighted in bows of vivid scarlet ribbon, fastened in unexpected places, and brilliant sprays of geranium or verbena in her hair. One never could have conjectured, to look at her face, that Debby Dapplebee had been crossed in love; yet such was the fact. Miss Dapplebee was a sensible damsel; she neither took to secret tears nor wasting consumption on this account, but quietly bided her time, having a firm faith that Fate and Cupid together would work out their own salvation.

"Now, Debby," said the Squire, after a moment or two of meditative silence, "you just listen to reason. It's natural enough you should want to get married. Gals always do. And there's your cousin Petronius Jones would be glad of a wife—a sober, steady young man as ever was, with a snug farm and money at interest. Think o' that, now. Where's Harry Darrock, in comparison with *him*, I'd like to know? A poor, miserable medical student, without a penny to back him, and no prospects in particular, as ever I heard on, without it was the prospect of starvin' to death!"

"Uncle," cried Debby, "you shall not talk so. Harry is too good and true and noble to be thus abused."

"Fiddle!" quoth Uncle Dapplebee. "Debby, I didn't know George Dapplebee's daughter could be such a softy."

"I don't care," went on Debby, flushed and sparkling. "I will *not* listen to it. And all you say, Uncle Dapplebee, has only one effect, that of making me more resolved than ever about it."

At this the Squire subsided into silence, but like the celebrated parrot, he thought all the more. And the longer he considered the long and the short, and the *pro* and the *con* of the matter, the more firmly he resolved that pretty Deborah should become Mrs. Petronius Jones, and that Harry Darrock should be left to wear the willow at his leisure.

"The money ought to be kept in the family," argued the Squire within himself, "and the child must listen to reason."

So Squire Dapplebee rolled himself up in a certain hideous swathing of brown and green knitted work that he called his "comforter," and went off to the post-office.

Two letters—one directed in a crooked, straggling hand, to "Mr. Esquire Isaac Dappleby;" the other for "Miss Deborah Dapplebee," a boldly written missive, sealed with a clear round circlet of scarlet wax.

The latter Squire Dapplebee deliberately tore in two pieces and flung out into the street.

"I've seen that are handwritin' afore," said he. "Communications is cut off, my young friend, if only you knowed it."

The first epistle he opened at his leisure. It contained a few coarsely scrawled lines, extending crosswise across the page.

> "Honnerd Sir. If you wood Obtain evedence of what is True, and convence miss D. D., go to mr. Durruk's this evening between eight and ten. Number 17 Brooke st. their is a cerd-shindy, Licker and gamboling. See for yourself what the caracktir of the Man Is—and no more at present from
>
> "Yours too Command
>
> "A WELL WISHER."

Twice Squire Dapplebee read this by no means scholarly effusion before he fully comprehended its import. Then he carefully folded it, and placed it in his faded red-leather pocket-book.

"I don't know who it is," thought the Squire, "but, anyways, I'm obliged to him for the hint, and I'll drop round there. Ha, ha, ha! Darrock 'll have one guest he didn't quite calculate for!" and the Squire rubbed his hands in a sort of stealthy exultation.

"Uncle," said pretty Deborah, that evening, "the sleighing is splendid, isn't it?"

"Pretty fair, my dear," answered Uncle Dapplebee.

"Won't you take me to town this evening? I want to ask mamma for the pattern of my gored apron?"

"Not this evening, my dear," said the Squire. "Some other time. I've got business."

So the Squire harnessed up, and drove swiftly away, leaving Debby sitting at the window, her cheek leaning on one hand, and her great brown eyes gazing wistfully out into space.

"P'raps Cousin Petronius will be round this evening," called back the Squire, by way of consolation; but he did not see the grimace that twisted up Deborah's scarlet lips at this idea.

As straight as old Dobbin and the cutter could carry him, the Squire posted to 17 Brooke street. His informant was in so far correct that the front of the mansion was all shining with lights.

"So it's a big party, eh?" reflected the Squire. "Now how on earth does the fellow get money for this 'ere sort o' thing? I wouldn't a bit wonder if he was connected with some o' them counterfeitin' gangs we so often read about!"

His knock at the door was anticipated by a white-aproned colored man, who opened it with a flourish, and Squire Dapplebee found himself in a wide, brilliantly lighted hall, the staircase wreathed with flowers, and the sound of merry music proceeding from the parlors within, which were filled with guests. A portly gentleman with a white waistcoat appeared in the door-way; a lady in crimson velvet and feathers peeped over his shoulder.

"Eh?" quoth this gentleman. "What?"

"I've come to the card party!" said Squire Dapplebee, with a desperate clutch at his fast receding courage.

"There's no card party here!" cried the portly gentleman. "What the deuce do you mean, fellow?"

"Don't Harry Darrock lodge here?" demanded the Squire.

"Does this look like a lodging house?" shouted the gentleman, waxing wroth. "James, call the police at once. I believe this fellow is a sneak thief."

And, in spite of his remonstrances, Squire Dapplebee was unceremoniously hustled out by the white-waistcoated gentleman and the black servant.

"I've been imposed upon," meditated the Squire, feeling as if he had been broiled, cold and frosty as was the night. "Some scoundrel has been making a tool of me! For there's the number '17 Brooke street' plain enough, and here be I, turned out o' doors like a Yankee peddler, or a tract distributer, or some o' them doubtful characters as goes round stealin' umberellers and greatcoats!"

And the Squire drove home, consoling himself by thinking what he would do, if only he could catch his false informant.

He strode indignantly into the house, feeling that it would be a sort of escape valve for his feelings to scold at Deborah a little. For was not she, indirectly, to blame for the whole thing?

But only the cat and the crickets and the blazing wood-fire were there.

"Where's Debby?" roared the Squire.

Chloe, the old colored woman, shuffled in from the kitchen with her hand behind her ear; the Squire repeated his question, in a tone as if he were bawling half across his farm.

"O!" said Chloe, "Miss Debby! Yes; she's gone."

"Gone! Where?"

"Dunno!" Chloe answered indifferently.

"Alone?"

"No, mas'r. Young gen'leman, wid a gay fine cutter, come and took her off."

"A—young—gentleman!" repeated Uncle Dapplebee, feeling his muscles stiffening with horror. "Not—not my cousin Petronius?"

"Bless your heart, sir, no!" cried Chloe. "Dis yer was a proper handsome young gen'leman, wid bright blue eyes, and a voice as clear as a bell."

Squire Dapplebee dropped limply into a chair.

"It's that—that vagabond Darrock!" he roared. "The villain! to come and take her away, under my very nose, when brother George Dapplebee sent her here expressly to get her out of his way! Chloe, what *on earth* made you let her go?"

"Nobody never told me not," Chloe answered stolidly. And then she went back to her task of raisin seeding in the kitchen; for although the skies fell, Chloe felt that the mince-pie making must proceed just the same.

Deborah came back in about a week, as Mrs. Henry Darrock, radiant as a May morning; and Cousin Petronius Jones is still in search of some one who will have him. As for the Squire, he declares that he has washed *his* hands of all such tomfoolery, and will neither meddle nor make, hereafter, in the love affairs of his nephews and nieces. Sensible Squire Dapplebee!

LITTLE BY LITTLE.

A LIFE LESSON.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

Do not tell me it is the same old story, and therefore of no account. There is no lesson of real life that is not as old as life itself. The blessing which came of the first throb of a loving heart has been daily and hourly re-echoed for thousands of years, and it is as sweet and fresh to-day as it was in that morning hour when the sun first shone upon the love scene of Eden. And those lessons of life which lead to the true living, though they may have been preached and expounded over and over again, can never be preached too much. They cannot be worn out. The need of their guidance will cease only when this life shall have been swallowed up in the life eternal. So, though this same lesson has been often illustrated and enforced, I deem it no unseemly repetition to tell the simple story which shall illustrate it again. I know Albert Moore well,—I have known him from his boyhood,—and I knew Alice in the other years, also; and the lesson of their life which I now write down culminated under my own observation.

Albert Moore, at the age of twenty-five, took Alice Warren for his wife, and fancied that he was going to be as happy as it is given to ordinary mortals to be. Albert had been in the army—had gone in at the age of twenty—had fought through from Ball's Bluff to Richmond—had come out with a captain's commission,—and had found his way, immediately upon his discharge, to his early love, and demanded the helping hand in the commencement of the peaceful life. Alice did not refuse him. She had held him in her heart through the dark years; and now, in the glow of the glad light, she joined hands with him happily and hopefully.

Albert had come from the army with but little money; but he had a good trade, a stout heart, and a strong pair of hands; and he borrowed no trouble for the future. Alice had saved up a few hundred dollars from her wages as a teacher, and when the twain had become man and wife they found, upon a careful inventory, that they had enough to furnish a small house comfortably. Albert proposed that they should hire a tenement in the city; but Alice thought they had better secure a pretty cottage in the suburbs—a cottage which they might, perhaps, in time, make their own. Albert had no disposition to argue the question; so the cottage was found and secured. It was a pleasant, rural location, and so connected with the city by rail, that Albert found no difficulty in going to and from his work-shop.

During her five years experience in school-teaching Alice had learned many things, and having been an orphan from an early age she had made the problems of real life one of her chief studies; and what she had learned in this latter department served her well in her new station. After her marriage she found Albert to be just the man she had known him to be in the other years. He was kind to a fault; free-hearted and generous; ready always to answer the call of friendship; and prone to pluck the flowers that bloomed to-day, regardless of what might be nurtured to bloom on the morrow.

They had been married but a few months when Alice found that her husband was cutting his garments from day to day exactly according to the daily supply of cloth. Not a shred was he likely to save up for the cutting of an extra garment for a rainy day to come.

"Albert," she said to him, one evening, "do you know we ought to be laying up a little something?"

Albert looked up from his paper, and waited for his wife to elucidate.

"I think I heard you tell Mr. Greenough that you had no money—that you had paid away your last dollar this very afternoon?"

"Exactly, my dear; but you know to-morrow is pay-day."

"And you have spent your last month's earnings?"

"Yes."

A brief silence ensued, which Albert broke:

"Come, Alice,—you've got something on your mind. Out with it. I will listen."

And then Alice, in a smiling, pleasant way, went on to tell her husband that they ought to be laying up something.

Albert smiled in turn, and asked how such a thing was to be done when it cost all he could earn to live.

"You earn three dollars and a half a day?" said Alice.

"Yes."

"George Somers earns only three dollars?"

"You are right."

"And yet he lives, and does not run in debt."

"But he is forced to deny himself many little comforts which we enjoy."

"And the one great comfort which we *might* enjoy we are throwing away."

"How is that, Alice?"

"The comfort of a little sum in bank which we could see growing toward the answering of future wants."

Albert could not, for the life of him, see how it was to be done; and Alice feared that a lesson of empty words might be wasted. She knew her husband well. She knew that his ambition needed a substantial prop. Never, of his own accord, would he commence to save by *littles*. He did not estimate money in that way. Had some kind fairy dropped into his hand a Five-twenty bond for five hundred dollars, he would have put it away gladly; and with such a nest-egg in the start he might have sought to add to the store. But he could see no hope in a dollar bill, and much less could he discover the nucleus of a grand saving in a fifty-cent scrip.

With Alice it was different. From her meagre earnings as school-teacher she had, in less than five years, saved up three hundred dollars; and the first saving she had put by had been a silver dime. She knew what little by little could do, and she was determined to show it to her husband. She must be patient and persevering; and these qualities she possessed in an eminent degree. It was to be the grand undertaking of these first years of her wedded life, and to it she would bend every available energy. She planned that, if possible, she would get hold of that odd fifty cents per day; or, if she could not do that, she would do the best she could.

Generous, frank, loyal, and loving, Albert was an easy prey to the wiles of a wife as loyal and as loving as himself. He gave her money when she asked for it; and she asked for it when she thought he had any to give.

And here let me say that Alice knew her husband would not run in debt. That was an evil they had both arrayed themselves against in the outset. When Albert's purse was empty he bought nothing; and when it was full he was apt to buy more than he needed. Alice knew all this, and governed herself accordingly.

"I think," said Alice, one evening, "that I must fix over my old brown cashmere for winter. I should like a new one; but I don't suppose you can afford it."

Albert looked grieved. The idea that he could not afford his wife a new dress!

But for such an one as she wanted it would require twenty-five or thirty dollars.

"If you want it, get it!" said Albert, emphatically. "I will let you have twenty dollars from this month's pay, and the balance you shall have next month."

Alice got the thirty dollars, but she did *not* get the new dress. By the outlay of five dollars for new trimming she contrived to fix over the brown cashmere so that it looked every bit as good as new.

And so Alice worked. Sometimes she asked her husband for ten cents; sometimes, for fifty cents; sometimes, for a dollar; and sometimes, for more; and at the end of a year, upon carefully reckoning up, she found that she had managed to get hold of rather more than her fifty cents a day; but she had done it by denying herself of many things, some of which were really needful.

The result of the first year's effort inspired Alice with new life and vigor. She had saved up one hundred and fifty dollars, and had invested it in government bonds. Through the influence of a dear friend who was in a large banking establishment, and to whom she had confided her secret, she was enabled to get the bonds at their face value.

It was only a little at a time—sometimes a *very* little—but even a penny dropped into the strong box was so much gained.—Only a little,—but those littles, multiplied by other littles, grew amazingly. The husbandman who should set himself down by a hill of corn, and wait to see the tender blade put forth, would be wearied and disheartened; but he knows, if he plants the tiny seed, and cultivates as he ought, that the harvest of golden grain will come at length.

Albert and Alice were married in the spring of 1866. It was on an evening of August, 1870, that Albert came home out of sorts. He had been notified that he must leave the cottage. They must give up the pleasant home, and lose the little garden they had cultivated with so much fondness and care.

"The owner wishes to sell," he explained; "and he has had an offer. He asks two thousand dollars, and must have five hundred down."

Alice's eyes gleamed with a radiant light. She had been thinking for some time that she must let her husband into her secret. It had begun to wear upon her. And now the time had come as though by providential interposition.

She did not make a scene. She would not add to the *denouement* by any by-play. She simply got up and went away to her cabinet, and when she came back she brought a little book in her hand.

"Albert," she said, "let's you and me buy the cottage."

Albert looked at her in amazement; and directly it flashed upon him that there was too much solemnity in her look and tone for badinage. Something that he had noticed during the past months came back to him, and he trembled with the weight of suspense that fell upon him.

Alice saw and understood. At first the great flood almost overcame her, and she was forced to rest, and to wipe her eyes, before she could proceed. And then she showed her book—that she had more than eight hundred dollars in bank. The ice once broken, she told her story in glowing words. She told how she had saved up little by little, and how she had at length found herself able to purchase a fifty-dollar bond. And then she told how her uncle, in the banking-house, had taken charge of her investments; and how, under his management, the interest had accrued in amazing volume.

But the grand result was not the chief thing. The chief thing was in the beginning—was in the *first little* which had been religiously saved until the second little could be added to it.

And now, as a result of his wife's careful and tireless working, Albert found something upon which his ambition could take a fair start. He never could himself, from so small a commencement, have reared the pile; but with the structure started, and its proportions all blocked out, he could help on the work. He could now see how it was done,—and not only that, but the demonstration was before him that the thing COULD BE DONE.

One year has elapsed since Albert Moore received the lesson from his wife, and by joining hands with her, and bending his own energies in the same direction, he has accomplished, during the twelvemonth, what would have seemed to him a marvel in the earlier time. He has laid by more than fifty cents a day; and the cigars, and the beer, and the other condiments of life which he has surrendered to the work, are not missed,—rather, he holds them as so many enemies conquered. And Albert can improve his home with cheerful heart, and he can set out new trees and vines in his garden with bright promise, because he sees, day by day, the pretty cottage growing more and more his own. The end approaches a little at a time—little by little,—but it approaches surely, nevertheless; and there is a great and satisfying joy even in the labor and in the anticipation.

* * *

—A small sorrow distracts—a great one makes us collected; as a bell loses its clear tone when slightly cracked, and recovers it if the fissure is enlarged.

WIT AND HUMOR.

IN the police court in Worcester, a man whose business was that of dyeing, being on the stand to testify to the effect of an assault that had been committed upon him, stated, "I was choked till I guess I was 'most dead." "That is not evidence, your Honor," exclaimed the counsel for the defendant; "he cannot be allowed to testify as to what he *thought* about being near dead." "Yes, he can," retorted the City Marshal; "he's a *dyer* by profession, and we can put in his opinion as that of an expert." The objection was withdrawn.

A FAMOUS Prussian general was recently inspecting some military stables which had not been well kept, and exclaimed in thundering tones, "Here are cobwebs! The stable is festooned with cobwebs!" "Yes, sir," said a level-headed sergeant, "we keep them here to catch the flies, so as to prevent them from teasing the horses."

AN old sea-captain, who attended a full-dress party after his return from a long voyage, was astonished at the costume of the ultra fashionable ladies, but finally reconciled himself to it, saying, "I suppose they wear their dresses half-mast as a mark of respect to departed modesty."

"POTATOES!" cried a darkey peddler in Richmond. "Hush dat racket—you distracts de whole neighborhood," came from a colored woman in a door-way. "You kin hear me, kin you?" "Hear you! I kin hear you a mile." "Tank God for dat. I's hollowin' to be heard. Tatoes!"

"I CANNOT stand this wastefulness any longer!" said an irritated father, to his dissipated son. "You have no faculty of saving or keeping anything." "Please do me the justice to admit," replied the son, "that I have always assiduously *kept* late hours."

A BRIDGEPORT lady remained too long on a train to kiss a lady friend, and in trying to get off, was thrown violently upon her face. "If ever I kiss anybody again!" she exclaimed vengefully, as she arose—"any woman, at least," she thoughtfully added.

WHY is street cleaning in New York so uniformly neglected? Because when the dirt is in the form of mud the inhabitants hesitate to take any steps in the matter, and when it is in the condition of dust they are compelled to shut their eyes to it.

IF anybody has any doubts about anything not being read in a newspaper, just let him put something which he would not like to have known in the obscurest part of the obscurest paper he can find, and then he'll see how it is himself.

A COLLEGE professor, in describing Commencement day, says, "Aurora appeared with eyes wide open and unclouded brow, wearing a happy smile on her dimpled cheek." He meant that it was a pleasant morning.

A DIFFERENCE IN NATURES.—Two sisters met at a railroad station. "O, my dear sister!" exclaimed one enthusiastically, as they embraced. "You've been eating onions!" said the other, sternly and disgustedly.

A YOUNG fortune-hunter surprised his friends by announcing that he was going into agriculture, and should commence his husbandry by removing weeds—some rich and lovely widow's weeds.

A MISSOURIAN, suing for a divorce, was asked what led him to take such a course. "What lead!" he exclaimed. "Why, *hot* lead—in my ear—poured in by my wife!"

A GROCER in Saratoga is willing to admit that honest tea is the best policy, but when it comes to coffee he does not believe in running the thing into the *ground*.

A GENTLEMAN in a cheap restaurant the other day was heard to give the fearless order, "Waiter, let that cheese move this way!"

A LIGHTNING exchange commences an item thus: "As we go to press, a man named Sullivan is being run over on the railroad.'

"LET the toast be, dear woman," as the man said to his wife, when he wanted to eat it all himself.

IN Ohio they consider rye whiskey to be the "grain elevator" which works with the least friction.

The Western wits now call bigamy Utahlizing the female sex.

A LADY'S last glass before going to bed—The looking-glass.

CURRENT ITEMS.

A RECENT eclipse was celebrated by the natives of Allahabad, India, in the usual manner. Vast numbers, in holiday trim, with wives and children, hurried down to the confluence of the two rivers, and shouted with a great shout as they saw Raha—the moon—attack the sun with its voracious jaws. One of them, who went in to bathe, fell into the "voracious jaws" of an alligator, and suffered a permanent eclipse, disappearing from his friends for ever.

A THIEF stole a gold watch, bracelets, and other valuable articles of a lady living in St. Albans, Vt., and the sheriff not showing sufficient alacrity in pursuing him, the lady started off herself, in her own carriage, and tracing the purloiner over two hundred miles, she finally caught him in Canada, and got back a portion of her property—all he had left of it.

AT Pocahontas, Ark., a fortnight ago, a woman while passing a house was torn in pieces by a pack of dogs. A day or two after another person was attacked by the same pack and narrowly escaped. The local paper says the proprietor has since agreed to keep his dogs tied up, which indicates a very accommodating spirit.

THE other afternoon there was a desperate affray on the Northboro' (Mass.) stage, shortly after it left Worcester. Two drunken men insisted on riding without paying their fare; a deputy sheriff attempted to arrest them; they showed fight, and both they and the sheriff were badly cut up.

A YONKERS lady says it is always safe, when travelling, to inquire the price of any article before deciding to purchase. She bases this opinion on the fact of a railroad restaurant taking fifteen cents for a cup of coffee from all who didn't ask the price, and only ten cents from those who did.

A FEW days ago, an aged colored woman, in Richmond, attempted to light her pipe at a kerosene lamp, holding the pipe in her mouth and tipping the lamp toward it. An explosion followed, which burnt and disfigured the poor old creature's face in a frightful manner.

A MAN in Paris some days ago, determined to search out a new method of committing suicide, tied a rope to his ankle, fastened the other end to a fourth story window, and then leaped out. As a result, his brains were dashed out against the wall of the house.

A MUSICIAN doing business at Huddersford, England, was recently sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment because, when asked by his sick wife to run for the doctor, he merely sat down by her bedside, and played the "Dead March in Saul."

THERE are three Arabs at work on a Massachusetts railroad, who cannot speak a word of English. Their names are Mirt Ali, Mahomet Beniver, and Siard Ben Abram. They are said to be faithful workers.

A DRUNKEN man jumped from a train in full motion on the Hartford and Springfield Railroad, and was taken up for dead. But he soon revived, and it was found that his only injury was a broken arm.

ONE Saturday evening lately, a clergyman who had just arrived at Vineyard Haven, went in bathing after supper, was chilled, had an apoplectic fit, and died at 5 o'clock on Sunday morning.

IT is reported that a scheming mother at Saratoga married off an already married daughter to a rich Georgian, and got a big slice of his fortune before the fraud was discovered.

A RESIDENT of Rutland, Vt., recently tried to beat his wife to death, dragging her by the hair over rocks and stones, but was arrested before he accomplished his purpose.

A LITTLE child in Shioctan, Wis., ran in to her mother the other day, and begged her to come out and see a "big cat on the fence." The "big cat" was a big bear.

A BLOCK of limestone was recently quarried in Vermont which was forty feet long, fourteen feet wide, and ten feet thick. It weighed over five hundred tons.

IT is stated that forty millions of young shad have been hatched and turned loose in the Connecticut river, at South Hadley. Who counted them?

JAMES BROCK, of Springfield, was thrown from a load of hay on Saturday of last week, and broke his neck. He lived half an hour.

A BOY living in Worcester, getting caught between a wagon and a stone-wall, his head was crushed, killing him instantly.

THE vintage of California this year is estimated at eight million gallons of wine, besides the brandy crop.

SUMMER AND PARENTS.

BY WILLIAM ROSS WALLACE.

My Queendom sparkles once again,
  My royal wreaths are curled,
My triumph music's sung by birds,
  Or by the torrents hurled;
My emerald mantle trailed for all,
  My banner blue unfurled,
And I, in joy, am shedding joy
  Amid a peopled world.

The stately mountains give delight—
  How gloriously they stand!
Their vast green coronals are there
  From me at Heaven's command;
But in the gently rounded hills,
  By loving soft winds fanned,
I have my crowning ecstasy,
  Along the rosy land.

For they the mothers' bosoms there
  So image mid blest hours,
The life streams from them flowing out,
  And nursing Nature's powers,
While on their tops bloom lovingly
  A paradise of flowers,
And there by Heaven remembered too,
  In marriage-feeding showers.

How sweet to read their little lives!
  In every one to see,
As in embrace of wedded notes,
  The mated ministry.
The Hymeneal hours are here:
  What lovely fruit will be,
Of Human Love, for which all breathe
  The fragrant prophecy:

The prophecy through myriad years
  Fulfilled, and so impearled
By children—there they laugh and dance
  Beneath my roses curled.
O, fathers, mothers, your lives, theirs,
  For which, by God unfurled,
I came to hold my banner blue
  Above a peopled world!

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A BONE of CONTENTION;

—OR—

The Waldemar Succession.

By MRS. HARRIET LEWIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE HAMPTON MYSTERY," "THE BAILIFF'S SCHEME," "THE LADY OF KILDARE," "THE OLD LIFE'S SHADOWS," "A DARING GAME," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MYSTERY FULL OF PROMISE.

The little enamelled Louis Quinze clock upon the marble mantel-piece in Honor's room, at Lady Thaxter's house in Park Lane, had chimed the hour of seven when her ladyship knocked lightly at Honor's door. The young girl gave admittance to her hostess, who was in evening dress, and looking very stately.

Lady Thaxter's eyes beamed with admiration upon her young guest. Honor had attired herself in a pale blue silk, with over-dress of white lace, and wore ornaments of pale pink coral. Her splendid beauty was unusually vivid and brilliant. Her pale gold hair was crimped and fluffed, after the fashion of the day, and looked like a halo around the fair, sweet, tender face, with its bright frankness, its piquant witchery. Her big eyes of dusk were brave and lovely and sweet. In dress, manner and carriage, she was unmistakably a high-bred lady.

Her ladyship kissed the young girl, with a smile and a sigh, thinking how improbable it was that Sir Hugh Tregaron would care for any other woman after loving Honor.

"We will go down to the drawing-room now, my dear," she said kindly. "My friend and guest, the Hungarian Countess of Rothsmere, is already deep in conversation with Sir Hugh—upon politics, I think. The Countess is a famous politician, one of those deep-thinking women who understand all the leading questions of the day, and dares to form her own opinion of them. She is quite a power in Hungary. I hope you will like her, my dear. She is a sort of princess in her own country, lives in grand style and state, is owner of a small principality, immensely wealthy, and is a widow and childless. She will make a sensation in society, and will be besieged with suitors, but I hardly think she will marry again. I am impatient to introduce to her one of our English young ladies. We will go to her now."

Her ladyship conducted Honor down stairs to the drawing-room, a long and lofty room which had a hundred counterparts within the precincts of Belgravia.

In this room, in the midst of some grave discussion upon the attitude of the English ministry in some question at the moment before the country, were the Countess of Rothsmere and Sir Hugh Tregaron.

Lady Thaxter led Honor forward with conscious satisfaction. The girl's quiet self-possession, her total unconsciousness of self, her perfect good-breeding, her shy, sweet grace, and above all, her glorious beauty, awakened Lady Thaxter's pride in her and her affection for her.

"Lady Rothsmere," she said, "permit me to introduce to you my dear young friend and guest, Miss Glint, for whom I bespeak your cordial friendship."

Lady Rothsmere arose and acknowledged the introduction with a charming grace and courtesy.

As, however, her eyes rested full upon Honor's face, she started and turned pale, exhibiting an agitation as singular as sudden.

"I—I beg your pardon, dear Lady Thaxter," she said, in a sweet, cultured voice, now oddly tremulous, "but this young lady's face reminds me of one I knew once. I could almost fancy I had seen Miss Glint before;" and she made a strong effort to recover her wavering self-possession. "There is something oddly familiar to me in her countenance—in her eyes—her glance—her expression—"

She paused, a faintness seeming to sweep over her.

The Hungarian Countess was a very beautiful woman, and her beauty was as striking as impressive.

She was tall, not stout nor yet slender, but of a grand and imperial presence, looking as if born to command. She was apparently about thirty years of age, and her lovely, half-haughty face had not yet lost its early primrose bloom. Her eyes were like glowing sapphires, and the shadow of some past sorrow lurked in their blue depths. In singular contrast to her fair and still youthful face, was her hair, which, although abundant, was already gray. She wore it in heavy braids, with loose and fluffy crimps above her broad forehead, and it gave singular effect to her charming loveliness.

She recovered herself almost immediately, exerting a stern self-control, but Sir Hugh could see that she trembled, and that she was scarcely able to stand. She resumed her seat almost immediately, and the others grouped themselves near her.

"Were you ever in Hungary, Miss Glint?" inquired the Countess, in a firmer voice, her gaze lingering almost eagerly upon Honor's face. "Or in Vienna?"

"No, Madam," replied Honor. "I left school only last midsummer, and I have travelled but little during my life. Papa took me to Alexandria with him last autumn, but I saw only the ports at which we stopped, with the exception of a few short excursions inland."

"Your papa—is he living?"

"Yes, Madam. He is Captain Glint of the Mediterranean steamship *Argonaut*," said Honor, as proudly as if the captain had been a Lord High Admiral of the navy.

The Hungarian Countess sighed, while Lady Thaxter dexterously guided the conversation into a different channel, upon whose smooth current all went pleasantly.

The hour before dinner was soon passed. Sir Hugh gave his arm to Lady Rothsmere, conducting her to the dining-room, while Lady Thaxter and Honor walked together.

After dinner, Sir Hugh returned with the ladies to the drawing-room, and spent the evening in their society. Nothing of his own troubles, or of Honor's, were apparent in their looks or tones. Both were as cheerful and smiling as if their hearts were not aching with an unappeasable anguish and dread.

"I shall issue cards for a dinner party to be given next week," said Lady Thaxter, sitting before the fire with a feathered screen. "I am anxious that you should meet some of our finest governing minds, my Lady Rothsmere. As you have a taste for politics, I desire you to become acquainted with our Premier, and with some of our ablest peers. One of our grandest orators, and one whose speeches stir up all England now and then into a deep excitement, is Lord Waldemar. I especially desire you to know him."

"I have read some of his speeches," said Lady Rothsmere, her face kindling. "They are very fine, and burn with the fire of earnestness. I have noticed them only of late years. I take the English papers, of course, with the Continental ones, and have read Lord Waldemar's speeches for four or five years."

"He only came into the peerage some five years ago," said Lady Thaxter. "He was a Yorkshire Squire, when a chain of deaths broke the regular line of the Waldemar succession, and made him Baron. His family is Moer, I believe—O no, Darrel Moer is his nephew and heir—his own name is Floyd."

The pearl sticks of the Countess of Rothsmere's fan snapped suddenly apart and fell upon her garnet velvet dress. The Countess uttered a strange exclamation, and bent forward, white as death.

Lady Thaxter was too well bred to show surprise, but at this second singular agitation of her guest during the evening, she certainly must have wondered within herself.

"Dar—Darrel Moer, did you say, Lady Thaxter?" inquired the Countess, in a broken voice, and somewhat incoherently. "I—I believe I am a little nervous this evening. I have heard the name of Darrel Moer before."

"He is not Lord Waldemar," Lady Thaxter hastened to explain. "Lord Waldemar was a Squire Floyd, a wealthy Yorkshire gentleman, who came quite unexpectedly into the Waldemar title. Mr. Darrel Moer is his nephew, and will succeed him. The Baron was ill a month or two since, and went up into Yorkshire for his health. Hugh, be kind enough to glance over the columns of the *Court Journal* upon the small table at your elbow, and see if there is not some mention of Lord Waldemar's expected return to town."

Sir Hugh complied with the request.

"Yes, there's an item here concerning Waldemar, and it may be of interest to Lady Rothsmere, especially as Mr. Moer's name is mentioned in it," he said, as calmly as if the utterance of Darrel Moer's name were not painful to him. "Allow me to read it:

"'Lord Waldemar has been restored to his usual health by his sojourn in his native Yorkshire, and will return to town on Monday next, to take part in the expected debate before the House next week.

"'We learn that Mr. Darrel Moer, the long reputed heir of Lord Waldemar, finds his claim to both title and estates set aside by the advent in England of Lord Waldemar's granddaughter, a beautiful young lady of seventeen, the daughter of his lordship's only son. Miss Floyd has been educated abroad, and will, it is safe to predict, become a belle. She is to be presented, we understand, at the next drawing-room of Her Majesty.'"

A dead silence succeeded. Sir Hugh folded the paper presently, and said:

"So Mr. Moer is no longer Lord Waldemar's heir? I fancy he will attempt to retrieve himself by a marriage with the heiress."

A faint cry came from Lady Thaxter. The Hungarian Countess had fainted to insensibility. Her head fell back upon the cushions of her chair, and she looked like one dead.

Proper restoratives were applied, but it was many minutes before the Countess came to herself, gasping for breath, and opening her eyes in a wild stare, that showed conclusively that she had received some sudden and terrible shock.

"My dear friend," said Lady Thaxter, in alarm, "you are ill. Will you not allow me to send for a physician?"

"No—oh, no!" replied the Countess agitatedly. "I shall soon be myself again. Pray have no fears upon my account."

There was the sound of an arrival at the house door. Feeling unable to meet visitors at that moment, the Countess arose. Sir Hugh, comprehending her desire for retirement, offered her his arm, and conducted her through an inner drawing-room into a cozy boudoir.

He was about to leave her to herself, but she motioned him to remain.

"I must apologize for my seeming weakness," she said. "I—I am not yet recovered from the fatigue of my journey. And the—the sudden news—"

She paused, unable to proceed.

"Pardon me, Lady Rothsmere," said Sir Hugh, speaking the words that had trembled upon his tongue for many minutes, "but what is Darrel Moer to you? And what are you to Darrel Moer?"

The Countess crested her beautiful gray head haughtily, and anger sparkled in her blue eyes.

"Sir!" she exclaimed. "Do you address such a question to me?"

"Pardon, Countess," cried Sir Hugh, not flinching. "I seem impertinent, but my happiness depends upon your answer. And not mine alone, but that of the young girl who is now in the drawing-room."

"I do not understand."

"Allow me to explain. I am impelled to tell my story to you, Lady Rothsmere. I believe you may be able to help us. You have perhaps never visited England before, but you have known Darrel Moer. I remember that he has spent months at a time on the Continent, and that he was once gone from England a whole year. Perhaps you knew him then?"

The Countess' remarkable excitement at the mention of Darrel Moer's name had inspired Sir Hugh with a suspicion that hers had been no commonplace acquaintance with Moer—that she had been one of his numerous loves, perhaps—and that she was acquainted with Moer's secret history better possibly than any other.

He did not see her face now, it being turned into the shadow. But her voice was still tremulous, as she answered reluctantly:

"I saw Mr. Moer at Baden-Baden the year he was abroad, Sir Hugh. I must decline to be questioned further until I know why you question me. May I ask what is Darrel Moer to you?"

"This, Madam," cried Sir Hugh, with bitter emphasis. "He stands in my way to happiness—he blocks my path completely. I love Honor Glint—"

"I could see that," interposed the Countess softly, as his voice faltered. "And she loves you, Sir Hugh. That I also could see."

"It is true, Lady Rothsmere. Honor loves me, as I love her. But she is bound to Darrel Moer, and we cannot marry."

"Why does she not break with him if she loves you?" asked the Countess. "Will she perjure herself by marrying one, even if she is promised to him, if she loves another?"

"She is bound to him by no light promise, Lady Rothsmere, but by marriage vows."

"That child a wife! Impossible!"

"She is no wife," said Sir Hugh, "save that the words have been spoken over them that bind them together in an indissoluble tie. They separated at the very altar. Honor fled from him as from a pestilence. She will not live with him, nor bear his name. She loathes him—hates him!"

"Then why did she marry him?"

"Because Captain Glint's wife, who is not Honor's mother, was barbarously unkind to her, and Moer proposed to Honor when her sense of desolation was keenest. She liked him, and might have loved him in time. She married him, intending to be a good wife to him. But in the very vestry of the chapel where she stood after signing her name, he revealed his wicked nature to her so completely that she fled from the church and from him in very terror. It was after that, that I asked her to marry me and she learned that she loved me."

"It's a very strange affair," said the Countess.

"Yes. I have consulted a lawyer, and find that Honor is bound to Moer while he lives. She cannot have her marriage annulled—she has not grounds upon which to sue for divorce. My only hope is that Darrel Moer may have a wife living."

"What grounds have you for such a hope?" asked the Countess, almost in a whisper.

"None whatever, beyond a general knowledge of Moer's nature. He is ardent and fickle, and reckless to a degree. He might have married in a moment of infatuation, and have a wife living somewhere now. I have often wondered why he did not marry. The reason may be that he is married already."

"But if so, would not the marriage have been proclaimed?"

"Not if the match were likely to have been distasteful to his uncle, the present Lord Waldemar. His lordship is peculiar. He discarded his only son Wallace Floyd for a marriage with the daughter of a man with whom he had been at enmity, and Darrel may have taken warning at his cousin's fate. The young lady who was mentioned in that item in the *Journal* is the fruit of Wallace Floyd's marriage. The question whether Darrel Moer has been married or not, is one of absorbing interest to me, and involves my future happiness and welfare. If he has a wife still living, Honor's marriage to him is null and void. Can you lend me any assistance, Countess, in my inquiry into Darrel Moer's past life? Can you tell me if Darrel Moer has ever been married?"

He asked the question as if his life depended upon the answer.

There was a short and deathly silence. Then the Hungarian Countess answered, in a low voice:

"I have reason to believe, Sir Hugh, that Darrel Moer has been married!"

Sir Hugh nearly leaped from his seat. His astonishment was as great as his relief. His suspicions had then pointed toward the truth. His instincts had guided him aright. His hopes strengthened, and he exclaimed:

"He has been married! Oh, Lady Rothsmere, is his wife still living?"

The Countess hesitated. Sir Hugh longed to see her face, but he could not.

"I cannot tell you that," she answered him at last. "I am greatly interested in your story, Sir Hugh, and from my soul I pity you and Miss Glint. If I can help you, I will do so. But you must give me a little time. Let me think over what you have said. I wish to meet Lord Waldemar, his granddaughter, and—and Darrel Moer. I shall not betray your confidence, Sir Hugh, and again I promise you my help."

She held out her hand to him, as if to seal a compact. The closing of the house door attested to the departure of the visitors, and when Sir Hugh had released her hand, the Countess arose, and excusing herself, returned to the drawing-room.

Sir Hugh lingered to digest the information he had received.

"The Countess is the widow of a well-known Hungarian Count," he mused. "Her history is well known, and without a shadow of mystery. It is plain that she has been one of the loves of Darrel Moer. She says he has been married? Can she have been his wife? Can a woman so pure and beautiful as she have wedded Darrel Moer? It is possible. Honor was deceived by him. Did she marry the Hungarian Count thinking Moer dead? And does she consequently fear to own to that early marriage because it must invalidate the later one? I believe I have stumbled upon the truth. I believe that Lady Rothsmere is Darrel Moer's actual and lawful wife. And Honor's freedom must involve the ruin of the Countess."

CHAPTER XXIV.

ANOTHER STRANGE DEVELOPMENT.

We must now return to Floyd Manor, and continue the narration of the singular proceedings of Lord Waldemar's acknowledged heiress.

It will be remembered that the mansion had been closed for the night, the Baron had retired to his library to write letters, and the manager had taken his leave. It will also be remembered that Grimrod had passed around the angle of the dwelling, and had halted under the trees below Miss Floyd's windows, and while standing there had been startled by a bird-call near him. This bird-call had emanated from the throat of a young man who was ensconced in the shrubbery near at hand, and had had the effect to bring out upon the balcony of her parlor, into the chill March night, Miss Floyd herself.

The colloquy that had ensued between the lady upon the balcony, her form plainly defined against the light that filled her room, and the dusky figure upon the lawn, had more than startled Grimrod—it had horrified him.

The familiarity of the stranger whom Miss Floyd had addressed as "Antonio" thrilled him with a terrible fear.

"What are they to each other?" he asked himself. "Clearly this is the unknown lover whose existence I suspected, but which Henrietta Watchley denied. It is fortunate I came around here before going home. I am likely now to learn my young lady's whole history."

The idea did indeed seem probable. He waited for developments. They soon came.

The young man who had so successfully imitated the peculiar bird-call came up under Miss Floyd's windows, repeating his injunction to her to come down.

"I can't come," answered the girl pantingly. "How am I to leave the house unseen?"

"That's your look-out, Hilda," answered Antonio, and Grimrod noticed now that he spoke English with a strong foreign accent. "I don't care how you leave the house—only come! You dare not refuse when I command."

"We'll see about that," said the girl, more coolly. "I'm not coming down stairs, Antonio. Mrs. Watchley is always on the look-out, and her room is opposite mine. She's a perfect watch-dog. You can say what you have to say where you are."

"And have the old lord come popping out at me with a gun!" cried Antonio. "No, that won't do. If you don't come down to me, I'll come up to you."

"What! To my very room?"

"Yes, to your very room. You've sent your maid to bed, or you wouldn't be out there. Drop me a rope."

"I have no rope, and if I had I would not drop it for you. Keep your distance, Antonio."

The stranger laughed, amused perhaps at her threatening manner, and sprang forward and began to climb the ivy that covered a portion of the wall upon that side of the building, with the agility of a cat.

Miss Floyd still leaned over the balcony and watched him with dilated eyes.

Grimrod had been tempted to hurl himself upon the stranger and throttle him, but a sense of caution and a desire to probe the whole secret restrained him. He too watched Antonio with breathless eagerness.

The stranger climbed up to the balcony, but Hilda Floyd retreated before him into her rose parlor. She essayed to close the French windows upon her untimely visitor, but he pushed them open and followed her into her room.

Grimrod waited but a single moment for consideration, and then he crept forward, and began also to climb the ivy as swiftly and noiselessly as was possible.

The task was hard. He had not the supple limbs of the younger man who had preceded him, and his hands were fearfully denuded of their skin when he slipped over the balcony railing and paused on the balcony itself, panting and trembling.

The window was slightly ajar, and the curtains hung loosely before it. Grimrod crouched close to the aperture and peeped into the room.

Hilda Floyd was standing up near the fire. Her looks and attitude betrayed intense alarm. Her visitor had flung himself into a chair. He was a bold-faced, dashing sort of man, not young, and with a certain claim to good looks, but Grimrod's keen business eyes read his character as readily as if it had been stamped in legible letters upon his face. He was one of those adventurers which throng the Continental towns, as well as England, and who are popularly said to make their living "by their wits." This particular adventurer was shabbily dressed, and seemed to have suffered from adverse fortunes.

"A chevalier d'industrie!" was Grimrod's decision. "What has the girl to do with a fellow of that stamp? What has he come here for?"

He was soon to be enlightened upon the latter point.

"When did you come to England, Antonio?" asked the girl with a very desperation, turning upon him sullenly.

"I arrived at Dover this morning. I made all haste to England after you, Hilda. But you don't seem to appreciate my devotion. I travelled up to Yorkshire as fast as the train could bring me. I arrived all impatience, and it is thus you receive me! You are not much like the Hilda of Innsbruck."

"No, I am not the same Hilda," said the girl, with increasing sullenness. "I thought I loved you once, but I find I don't. The penniless charge of Mrs. Watchley might have fancied you, but how I can't see; but times have changed with me. I am not the granddaughter of some obscure Yorkshire squire, as I once believed myself," and she tossed her head. "I am the granddaughter of Lord Waldemar, one of the richest peers in England, and I am to be his heiress and Baroness Waldemar at his death."

"Well, I knew that years ago," said Antonio, with a smile.

"You knew it years ago? Why, you have only known me for a year!" ejaculated the girl, in surprise.

"I know more about you than you think," said the stranger. "I know, and you know, that you are engaged to marry me. I have hurried on after you post-haste, to claim the fulfillment of your promise."

Grimrod drew a breath of relief. He had begun to fear that the pair were already married.

"You'll have to wait a while, if you wait for me to marry you," said the girl scornfully. "You don't know my grandfather. He would cast me off if I were to disgrace him by a marriage with you. How could I introduce you to him? You call yourself Antonio Frivoli, and lay claim to some sort of title, and pretend to have money, but I don't believe your pretences any longer. For aught I know, you may have escaped from the galleys."

The stranger's cheeks reddened with anger.

"I'll tell you who I am," he cried recklessly, scowling upon Miss Floyd. "I am no titled personage; I am not rich; I am not even a gentleman. But I am your promised husband, and I have letters in your own handwriting calling me your betrothed. What will your proud, stern grandfather say to them, if I show them to him? Will the fact that you hate me now, and that you are pure and nobly born, compensate him for the publication of your ardent love-letters to me in the Sunday papers? Will he not cast you off? By Jove, I'll make the blow cut all the deeper by telling precisely who I am. What a head line that would make: 'Love-letters of Miss F——d, granddaughter of Lord W——r, to an ex-courier, an ex-mate on a Mediterranean vessel, an ex-valet—'"

Miss Floyd gave a shriek of dismay.

"Have you been all these dreadful things?" she asked, in horror.

"I have," he replied, with malicious exultation. "My dear Hilda, is it so unpleasant to reflect that you have kissed an ex-valet, that you have called him your 'own one'? I'd like to see Lord Waldemar when he reads the letters, with a short biographical notice of their recipient attached."

"You will not dare to do it? No paper will publish the letters."

"You'll see if there won't," said Frivoli significantly. "Shall I try to find a publisher?"

The girl shuddered.

"No—no," she said. "Such a publication would ruin me with grandpapa. He is awfully proud, and I'm afraid of him. You know that I believed you to be my equal in rank, and though my letters are foolish and fond, they are such as many a young girl writes to her promised husband. I am pure in thought and in deed, and grandpapa would know that, but he would never overlook the wretched folly and weakness of loving a man like you. The very fact that you are capable of publishing those silly, childish letters, shows what manner of man you are. I hate myself for ever having fancied you. You a gentleman! I must have been mad to have even dreamed it!"

Frivoli smiled sneeringly. He glanced around the chamber with appreciative eyes.

"The Baron must be immensely rich," he observed. "What a luxurious nest this is! No doubt he would pay me a handsome sum for the letters, if I were to offer to sell them to him?"

"He might—but not more than I would pay," cried the girl eagerly. "He would buy up the letters and send me off out of his sight. If he did not utterly disown me during his lifetime, he would put me in some strict school, or upon some country estate, and never allow me a glimpse of society. I will buy the letters. What will you take for them?"

"There are ten letters," said Frivoli coolly. "I'll take a hundred pounds a piece!"

"I haven't so much money. A thousand pounds! You might as well ask a million. How do you suppose I am to get a thousand pounds?"

"It is for you to find the way," returned Frivoli, with a mocking smile. "The money—or marriage!"

"Grandpapa has an excellent constitution and will live many years yet. He has the power to keep me out of every penny while he lives. He doomed my father and mother to poverty, and they died in a foreign land, and, so far as I know, were buried in paupers' graves. He would treat me in a precisely similar manner."

Frivoli reflected. In his secret soul he was not anxious to ally himself to the stern old Baron, whom he justly feared. And he knew that, even could he force Hilda Floyd to marry him, he would never profit in any manner by the marriage. He began to consider how much better it would be to leave the heiress in possession of all her grandeurs, and make of her his private gold-mine. Poor, she would be only a burden to him. Rich, she could keep him in money, so that he might lead the idle, luxurious life he loved.

"I dare say you are right, Hilda," he observed. "I certainly don't want a poor wife. I relinquish my claims upon your hand. You will of course want to buy the letters of me?"

"I have two hundred pounds. I'll give you that sum for them."

"That will pay for two. I can't sell them cheaper. They are unique, you know, the only letters of the kind that could possibly prove valuable to me. I will not abate my price!"

"I cannot get the eight hundred pounds additional which you exact," said Miss Floyd, after some anxious deliberation. "I'll take two of the letters, and buy the rest, one at a time, at stated intervals. Will that suit you?"

"Perfectly," returned Frivoli. "The letters are to be sold in the order of their dates."

Miss Floyd made some objection to this arrangement. The later letters were those she most desired to possess, but Frivoli was inflexible. She finally went to her desk and produced her pocket-book, and counted out the sum she had mentioned in crisp bank-notes. They had been paid to her by Lord Waldemar's manager, as a portion of her annual allowance, and had been designed to purchase articles of dress which would be absolutely required should she enter society in London.

Grimrod was tempted to show himself at this juncture. The transfer of the money touched him in a tender point, but he possessed his soul in patience. There might be more to hear.

It was as well for him that he decided to wait.

Frivoli counted over the money after Miss Floyd, found the sum correct, and gave into her hands two of the letters she had written him months before. She glanced them over, assuring herself that they were genuine, and burned them in the grate.

"I'll bring the other letters to you whenever I need money, Hilda," said Frivoli. "It's pleasant to have money in bank, and be able to draw it when one wishes. And now there's another little point I want to speak to you about. It is better to discuss it with you than with Lord Waldemar."

"What is it?"

"I was introduced to you at Innsbruck," remarked Frivoli irrelevantly it seemed, "by a lady whom Mrs. Watchley knew well and intimately. I became acquainted with the lady through boarding in the same house with her. This lady told me your history. Mrs. Watchley never hesitated to tell any one who took an interest in you, that you were the granddaughter of Squire Floyd. Mrs. Watchley claimed to have been your nurse. She said that she was a gentlewoman, reduced to take a menial position, but subsequently falling heir to a property, she educated you for your future rank, depending upon your grandfather's munificence to reward her, in due time, or your own gratitude to her, in the event of your grandfather's refusing to acknowledge you, or give you your rightful position during his lifetime."

"Well, what of this? It's all true."

"Not quite, my lady Hilda. I've been down to Trieste. I have seen your parents' fellow-lodgers. Mr. Grimrod went over the same ground, but my report would vary somewhat from his."

Grimrod's inscrutable eyes were fixed in one burning glance upon Frivoli. It was strange that the foreigner was not conscious of it.

"Well, what would your report be?" asked Hilda.

"I happened to be in Trieste when Mr. Grimrod came there," said Frivoli, "and the fact that he was hunting for a Hilda Floyd came to my ears. As I knew a Hilda Floyd, I naturally took an interest in his movements. I watched him, in fact, believing that he was searching for you. I visited the grave of Wallace Floyd, and also that of Mrs. Janet Floyd, who died in a public hospital, of quick consumption, as one of her fellow-lodgers reported to me when I asked him. Both Floyd and his wife suffered many privations, and both died from want of the actual necessaries of life. Floyd's employer caused the pair to be buried side by side, and erected a neat stone, with their names and ages. But for him, both would have been turned from their very graves before this, and other bodies would have been placed upon their bones. I should think the Baron of Waldemar would sleep well of nights when dreaming of those two neglected graves in Trieste. But it was not this I meant to say. I discovered in Trieste," and now Frivoli's eyes gleamed, "that the name of Mrs. Wallace Floyd's child's nurse was not Henrietta Watchley, but that it was Margaret Cropsey!"

The open window trembled, and the curtain fluttered. Miss Floyd smiled incredulously.

"It is true," said Frivoli, "and I can prove it. The same fellow-lodger of Mrs. Floyd who told me how the poor gentleman and lady wasted by turns, and died almost of starvation, told me also that the child's nurse of young Hilda Floyd was no gentlewoman, but only a faithful, kindly, ignorant nurse, who had been a servant all her life. She was threatened with illness when she went away from Trieste, taking the child with her, but was supposed to be trying to make her way with the child to England. She promised the dying Mrs. Floyd to convey the child to its grandfather. I traced her to Malta—"

"It's false!" said Miss Floyd. "My nurse never went to Malta."

"Your nurse didn't. Hilda Floyd's nurse did, and took the child with her. I failed to get any trace of her at Malta, except that she had gone to a hotel, wild with fever, and had been turned out into the street, the child still in her arms. The landlord feared she would drive away his boarders, I suppose. She was believed to have drowned herself in the delirium of the fever, but several vessels left Valetta that night, going in different directions, and it's possible she found passage in one of them, provided the captain did not suspect the existence of her fever. I believe that Margaret Cropsey went on one of those boats. I believe she is alive to-day. I believe the real Hilda Floyd is alive to-day also, and ignorant of the rights of which you are defrauding her."

"The real Hilda Floyd! Who then am I?"

"That question puzzles me," said Frivoli. "I know who you are not. I don't know who you are. But if you remain to the world Hilda Floyd, you'll have to pension me off pretty handsomely, I can tell you. This secret is my fortune!"

The French window was pushed open at this crisis, and Grimrod, tall, lank, dark and inscrutable, a very Mephistopheles, stalked into the room!

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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TOO MUCH OF A CONSTITUENT.

Mr. Solomon Topple, as we choose to call him, was our heavy moral man. He put on very soft gloves when he manipulated morally among his numerous constituency. He was a man of wealth, and had been Judge of Probate, and had been several seasons in the State Legislature. In short, he was an upright man, and a man of marked influence. In course of time it came to pass that the sober citizens of our village, seeing the misery which intemperance was working to a multitude, proposed the formation of a Temperance Society, and a call was issued to that effect. The meeting was held in the church, and the leaders of the movement presented their plans for the formation of the society,—and they would have the Pledge an affair of strict total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks. The meeting was very full, but for a time the people seemed to be backward in expressing their opinions. Many of them sympathized with the spirit of the occasion, though not quite ready to adopt the principle of entire abstinence.

At length Solomon Topple arose. He said he was in favor of temperance,—and he went on in glowing language to picture the good results of temperate living, both in eating and in drinking. But he did not believe that in order to be temperate we must pledge ourselves to total abstinence. Many good things might be abused,—and he quoted Scripture to prove it. Wine was a good thing,—and he quoted Scripture to prove that also. Particularly did he emphasize Paul's advice to Timothy concerning a little wine for the stomach's sake. "We go for the very best kind of temperance," he said,—"temperance in all things; but we cannot allow a society to prescribe what we shall eat, or what we shall drink. Thus should we sacrifice our manhood, and knock from under our feet the very foundation of true manly living. Each must be a law of life unto himself so far as eating and drinking is concerned. I am ready and willing to lend my hand and my purse to any good work in that direction."

A slight applause followed these remarks, but directly the noise was hushed as old Tom Drammer arose and staggered out into the broad aisle. Tom was the toughest old drunkard of the village, and had been going down the dark and dismal valley for years.

"Mister Mod'rator!" he cried, steadying himself by one hand upon the rail of a pew, and swinging the other over his unkempt, tangled head, "Squire Topple has 'spress'd my 'pinions 'xactly. Them's the true sentiments. I go with the Squire!"

Tom Drammer's speech was short, but it was the speech of the occasion. It completely upset the arguments of the Squire, and upset the Squire, also. In fact, Tom proved too much of a constituent. Nobody cared to come in on that side after him; and the result was, the Society was formed then and there, and its corner-stone was Total Abstinence. C.

THE NEW YORK LEDGER

ROBERT BONNER, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1872.

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ROBERT BONNER, Publisher,
Corner of William and Spruce sts., New York.

The Prison Congress—A Sensible Idea.

The result of the late Prison Congress—at least the main result—may be very briefly stated. It is contained in the single proposition that prisoners are to be treated as human beings, and with a view to their reformation and improvement.

When a person's self-respect and self-esteem are gone, everything is gone; and yet all of our prison systems, at present, are calculated to annihilate the feeling of self-respect in the convicts. This is unchristian. It is barbarous.

Prisoners, in many of our institutions, are not even known by their names, but simply by numbers. The grand object seems to be to make them think as little of themselves as possible.

Then they are kept in intellectual darkness. Dr. LIVINGSTONE, in the interior of Africa, is hardly more shut out from the sources of information as to what is going on in the world, than a convict in a State prison.

It is said that to furnish them with the newspapers would render them more discontented. This may be doubted; and even if it would, it would be a more charitable means of causing discontent than many which are now practiced, such as noisome cells, bad food, excessive tasks and cruel punishments.

We think prisoners should be securely confined, so that they cannot escape. Then they should be made as comfortable as possible, consistently with such security.

The next thing should be to furnish them with suitable employment; and in order at once to stimulate them to habits of voluntary industry, and at the same time to render their labor more productive, they should be allowed a certain per centage of its profits. Wherever this plan has been adopted we believe it has worked well.

The next great thing should be to improve the prisoners in mind and heart. Give them books and papers to read, and let those who are entirely ignorant be regularly instructed in the elementary branches of education. Indeed, we have great doubt whether the State would not be better off if one-half of every day were spent by *all* the prisoners in school, studying such branches as are adapted to their capacities and previous acquirements respectively—accompanying the intellectual instruction with a large degree of attention to moral culture.

With such a system, it seems to us that prisoners would generally possess better characters at the expiration of their terms of confinement, instead of worse, as it seems to be pretty well understood is the case now.

It is certain that some great reform will have to be made in our administration of criminal law. Both property and life are growing constantly less and less secure. If means cannot be found to reform prisoners, it will become necessary to keep a much larger number permanently shut up. This would be cruel if it can be avoided safely; but it is not as cruel as to turn them loose, every little while, unchanged in character, to prey upon society.

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Whatever You Do, Do Well.

We receive letters, very frequently, containing applications for an opportunity to write for the *Ledger*, sometimes inclosing specimen articles, and concluding with a request that we will excuse mistakes on account of haste, and an assurance that future articles will be better.

Now such a termination to a letter we always consider, of itself, a sufficient ground for condemnation of the writer. It shows him unqualified, not only to write for the *Ledger*, but also to do anything else well.

"I have not time," is the apology. What is the reason you have not time? Is it not of sufficient importance that you should do well what you are attempting—that you should take sufficient time for it?

The fact is, that people who are in so much of a hurry that they can do nothing properly, are generally those who have nothing of importance to do. Men whose time is very much occupied, and who have a great deal of business to attend to, are very apt to have an appreciation of the necessity of doing things well.

A boy writes us a long letter, saying that he is an assistant-librarian, and asking our opinion whether he had better hold on to his present situation, or relinquish it to go to school. At the end of two and a half pages of law paper, he says:

"Please express your opinion of my *handwrite*."

He was too indolent or too careless to look his letter over and see that he had said "*handwrite*," instead of handwriting. If he lives to be forty years old, he will probably have learnt that when he sends a letter to a stranger, and asks that stranger to form an estimate of him by his letter, it is worth even his while to read the letter over and see that it is expressed and spelt correctly.

It is better to do one thing a day as it ought to be done, than to half do a thousand.

WESTWARD HO!

BY REV. DR. JOHN HALL, NEW YORK.

"I see you in the *Ledger* sometimes—we take it for the children."

So said a lady to me in Chicago. She had come some hundreds of miles "for the sake of old times," as people will do who have had the good fortune to draw their first breaths in the moist air of Ireland. Her allusion to the *Ledger* set two trains of thought in motion.

She took it "for the children." Well, they will not see in it an impure sentence, a coarse association, or a suggestion of current criminality, even in an advertisement. The fiction is given them as fiction, which is a great deal better than giving them fiction as *fact*, and really good fiction is nearer the truth than many matter of fact records, such as the minutes of the City Government, or of the Erie Board. What a real gain it would be to society, if all printed papers were truthfully labelled! How many "reports," "resolutions," "memoirs," "biographies" and "autobiographies" would be barely "founded on fact;" and from some fine volumes one should erase "History," and put in its place a "work of imagination."

And the second thought respected the immense power of a paper like the *Ledger*. "We take it for the children." So they do in Salt Lake City; so they do here in San Francisco, the newsman tells me, more than any other paper of its kind. The Mormons know Mr. Beecher, and Fanny Fern, and Ethel Lynn, as well as the New York folk do; and the young (with a small "y") people of the valleys read, no doubt with curious wonder, those correspondents' columns in which masculine hearts disclose themselves as lavishing all their wealth of love on single individuals, and feminine souls flutter with excitement if a second lady even interests her exclusive property in man.

And so thinking, we say good-bye to Chicago, wonderful in its desolation—with its wide acres of ruin—the debris mostly cleared away—here and there a bar of iron or a twisted pipe showing how ruthless the fire had been—the poor burned and blackened trees remaining as monuments of what was; but on the south side more wonderful still in its renovation. Men build up their business places before they build their homes; and the taste, solidity, and fitness of new Chicago will far eclipse the old. Chicago atmosphere imposes no necessity on the people to run away in summer. The cool airs from their inland sea make it pleasant in July. Hence one finds the churches filled on the Sabbath; and as far as the writer's observation extended, with worshippers. What an inspiring thing it is to hear two thousand human voices lifted up in praise! Talk of monopolies and centralization! Is there any case so blamable as that which is weekly tolerated in ten thousand places, where small parties of four monopolize the praising of the Almighty? What clergyman will have the courage to say "in meeting," after the first verse, "Ladies and gentlemen of the church, I did not mean the choir alone. I said, 'Let *us* praise God.'"

Let others speak of Chicago as they find it. I shall do so too. I was arrested on the way to my hotel, and carried to a substantially built stone mansion on the lake side, held there with my entire party for several days, and judges and high officials of the place were cognizant of the fact, and did not interpose; in fact, they only laughed when I represented that, theoretically, this was a free country, but that practically I did not find it so. Let others describe Chicago men—and women, as they find them. I say good-bye to the men of the place, with a sigh, and set them down as able, amiable, hospitable, and indomitable.

Away—over illimitable plains, green and golden, grass and grain, blue sky and distant prairie mingling in the horizon, the view broken by flocks and herds and habitations of men. Who is to eat all this corn? Americans cannot pretend to do it. Well, thank God, for half the world, "there is corn in Egypt," and the goodly succession of Josephs must surely be sought among the "elevators" of the West. Away by the long reaches of the Missouri, golden with sun-flower, and over the rich loam—heavy with corn, and awaiting the coming thousands of farmers and their flocks—that lies in endless acres along the banks of the Platte River. Surely no American knows the extent of the nation's patrimony till he has gone, day after day, toward the setting sun, and as hill and plain follow one another, has wondered, as the hymn says, "When will the long succession end?"

The constant mystery is, why men do yearly battle with stones and tree roots at the East, with these fertile expanses, at two or three dollars an acre, awaiting occupation. "All in good time," is all we can say. For, no doubt, the day will come when these alkali plains, of which it was predicted to us that they would take the skin off the face, and give the throat as good as bronchitis—none of which predictions they made good—will be cultivated and peopled. In the mind's eye, it is easy to see the prospectus of the "Alkali Plains Improvement Company," the "Irrigation Association," with head-quarters at Alkali City, and branches through Wyoming and Nevada. And all this sage—surely American ingenuity is not to let it grow uselessly. Where is the enterprising originator of Plantation Bitters? where the happy owner of "S. T. X., 1868," which graces stones, rocks, and trees? Cannot some one show that sage tea makes the foolish wise, and the wise infallible? Could it not be made up neatly and cheaply, into three-pound packages, or dissolved into syrups and essences? Then might one read, in the religious press, some such paragraphs as the following:

"SAGE TEA!
TO THE BRAINLESS AND SENSELESS!
ASTOUNDING CURES!
NO EXCUSE FOR FOLLY, ANY MORE!!
BEGIN AT ONCE!!!

Hundreds of thousands of radical cures from the use of Sage Tea: read the following:

"'DEAR SIR: Common gratitude impels me to bear my decided testimony to your invaluable discovery. I was held by all friends and neighbors to be without Common-sense, or wisdom, when my attention was called to your incomparable preparation, and I began to use it. The effect is marvelous. I am now counted one of the wisest men of this settlement, and have been invited to run for Deputy-Assistant-Alderman of my native city of CROAKING—FROGS LANDING—a position of which any citizen might be proud, and to which I could not have aspired but for your wonderful preparation. I feel, sir, that it has made me another man, and I recommend it to all who are as I was.'

"Agents wanted. Liberal allowance to Lunatic Asylums, popular Lecturers, magazine writers, Literary and Scientific societies, etc."—whether for their own use, or their constituents', not apparent.

This way of utilizing the inexhaustible supply of sage will be as beneficial to the community as most of the specifics now in use, and sold in quantities to the very persons who need the wisdom-giving sage.

Seriously—as the fertility of Salt Lake plains shows, and as has been made apparent wherever water has been given to the soil that grows the "big sage," (the little scrubby plant indicates poorer soil)—there is no reason for these plains remaining barren, when it becomes worth while to cultivate them. But where is the need for fifty years to come? Not having any real estate in Nebraska, nor corner lots in Omaha, it is proper for me to testify that I never saw land that looked more inviting than one runs through for hundreds of miles—except indeed the sunny field-granaries of California.

It is impossible to get the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevadas into this article. Snows, as the guide-book elegantly says, "perpetual all the year round," canyons, rocks, Indians, prairie dogs, wolves, antelope, and cattle drivers, with Mexican pantaloons and moccasins, cannot be crowded together without impropriety; not to speak of miles and miles of snow-sheds, those true cathedral aisles of the West, through which the long processions of railway cars make their earnest way, while the shrill voices of locomotives make the music of ever-advancing civilization.

TREE SOUNDS.

BY HENRY WARD BEECHER.

We know that a vast deal of exquisite structure is lost to us, simply because our eyes are not fine enough to see it. The microscope reveals a world inside of that which we ordinarily see, which may fairly be said to be more beautiful than the obvious and exterior world. How far is this true of the other senses? We know that the sense of smell varies greatly with different people; that it can be educated, as it is in many trades, to extraordinary acuteness. Blind people learn to distinguish, by the sense of smell, things and persons which ordinarily men perceived by the eye only. We see in dogs this sense of smell carried to a degree of sharpness and nicety for which there is no parallel among human beings.

Now we know the same to be true of hearing. A musician's ear, among a hundred instruments playing together, will single out a discord with unfailing accuracy, and will perceive gradations of sound which are absolutely imperceptible to ordinary ears.

Now, any one who has been accustomed to study the habits of TREES, knows that there is a marked difference in shape, in their habit of reflecting the light which falls upon them. There is also perceived to be a very different habit of motion. Thus the aspen leaf quivers with a motion which a stiff-stemmed leaf can never get. But it is not as often perceived how widely different are the *sounds* which leaves make. Of course every one has noticed the sighing of pine leaves.

But let any one compare the sound produced by the white pine, with its relatively long fingers, with that which comes from the *Austrian* pine. He will see that the latter has a deeper and purer tone. There is a perceptible difference in the tone of *Pinus excelsa* from either of the others. The hemlock has a sound distinctively its own when the wind moves strongly through it. Every species of tree has a *sound* as distinctively its own as it has color, form and habit. The maples do not emit the same sounds as the large and stiff-leaved hickories. The willow, the ash, the oak, the birch, all have distinct and different tones, none the less real because not observed.

If, now, some instrument could be invented which would do for the ear what the microscope does for the eye, what revelation of sounds would take place! There is going on, every summer day, a concert of blending sounds from grasses, shrubs, vines, trees of every kind, which no one notices, but which would fill us with amazement of pleasure if it were suddenly made audible to our dull ears.

If an *auriscope* could be invented, we might go forth into a world as new as is opened to a short-sighted man when he first puts on near-sighted glasses.

There would arise from the development of a finer sense of hearing, a new use for trees. The landscape gardener would select and combine them not only for their sweetness, but for variety and harmony. Thus one's dwelling might stand in the midst of a perpetual arboreal orchestra.

If this seems carried to a fanciful extent, it is so only in appearance. But of one thing we may be sure, that the ear may be trained to perceive, in a degree far surpassing anything now common, the tone habits of trees, and that a great deal of gentle and refining pleasure might be derived from this enlargement of the scale of sound.

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BREAK OF DAY.

A full choir is not perfected till every musician has tuned his instrument. That *I* am not in tune is no reason why nature should be out.

Now comes the first streak of the gray dawn, when the swarthy angels of pain and darkness take flight, and each leaf shivers with a happy activity. Then pipes the little bird for food, like a babe after a long night of slumber; while the last bright star goes out in paleness. Now the garment of day is fully unfolded, and its rose and azure tints envelope us. The coarser sounds of barnyard music challenge our ears—if anything which nature does can be called coarse—the bleating of the sheep, the lowing of the cows, the roar of the bull, and the rough welcome of the wide-awake house dog. The matin song of the children and the chickens has begun. Both must be attended to, and that right early. The plowboy's whistle and the housemaid's laughter join in the chorus. The horse sniffs and snorts, as his stable door is opened, for the welcome breeze and the morning light. Old rooster mounts the tallest heap, and inquires if we are all ready.

We are ready for the day's toils and troubles, which had well-nigh overcome us when we were struggling with the fiends of pain and darkness. Ready, if it be God's will, to stay and bear. Ready, if it be God's will, to close our eyes and go; close them on all this beauty of earth and sea and sky; close them upon loving looks, and tender words, and grieving hearts, knowing that there is a resurrection morn fairer than any which we have here so faintly foreshadowed.

There comes an autumn to all this, as there comes an autumn to our lives. The friends of our youth are gone; new faces, new customs, new manners, new fashions—last, but not least, new faiths, pass like a panorama before us. We have made our choice; suffice it to say, it was not so in "*our* day;" and we are ready with the harvest sheaves of our faith and our time to be gathered in, and the great reaper stands waiting.

Ready? "*Mamma*." A shiver of pain runs through us. *Are* we ready? Will our faith fail us here? fail us at the tomb? Will there be no answer, when that little piping voice cries, Mamma? Surely the Good Shepherd will not fail us now. A happy smile breaks over the little face. In Heaven we shall know our own, for God's promises do not fail.

Nature has redeemed all the promises of our youth to us. To those who love her she will never become bankrupt. Her serene moonlight, the rosy sunset and sunrise, the incense of her flowers, and the melody of her myriad voices, will comfort other ears, as they have ours, ages yet to come. FANNY FERN.

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More Office-holders Now than Voters Then.

When WASHINGTON was inaugurated President of the United States, on the fourth day of March, 1789, the population of the Union was but a little over three millions, residing in thirteen States, and for the most part living on a narrow strip of land along the Atlantic coast. It was not much to be President of the United States then. The country had no influence abroad. Its flag was known in but few seas. The nation was poor; the office-holders were few; the Presidential patronage was meagre.

Now-a-days, however, it is quite another thing to be President of the United States. Our inhabited territory spans the continent, and our population exceeds forty millions. Our name is great in the earth; our flag is known on every sea; our position is in the front rank of the nations. There are more Federal office-holders and appointees now, than there were voters when WASHINGTON was elected. The expenses and the patronage of the Government have reached stupendous proportions, and the stealing likewise. Presidential aspirants were few in the early, poor and honest days of the Republic; but in these times there are a great many persons who would like the office "for public reasons of a private nature."

HERE AND THERE.

BY ETHEL LYNN.

"See! the birds are here." "Ah! the birds have gone."
One cry o'er another slips,
Till adown in the tangled beaten grass
The foot of the summer trips.

All the rosy wreaths of the May buds lie
Under brown September sheaves,
While across the top of the empty nest
Arachne her kerchief weaves.

"The birds have come." Did they ever sing,
Little Ruth, so sweet before?
Listen long and well, for the song to-day
Is a song without encore.

The birds will come with another spring,
And the May bush blossoms show;
But the sweetest song they can sing but once—
But once can the same rose blow.

"Ah! the birds have gone." Nay, the maid betrothed
Cares not for the empty nest;
For the sunny time, touching now and then,
Holds within a lover guest.

So they faintly call from the August edge
Of Summer, to say, "Good-bye!"
But she never misses the singing band
That fades in the southern sky;

For the happy time that was strangely short,
'Twixt coming and going wings,
Had its own fair idyl rhymed and set,
And this little Ruthie sings.

"See! the birds are here." "Lo! the birds have gone."
Ah! in all your lifetime, dear,
They will never sing, never once again,
As they sang, little Ruth, this year.

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SILAS GRIMGRIN'S TRAP.

BY JUDGE CLARK.

"It's a plain case," Mr. Grimgrin said. Against whom would there *not* have been a plain case, Mr. Grimgrin judging?

"No doubt he is guilty; but what are the facts?" inquired Miss Thugge, in whose theory of justice striking came before hearing.

"They are very simple," Mr. Grimgrin answered: "presented an altered check at the Oxide Bank this morning—in jail for forgery this evening."

"But there may be some explanation," timidly remarked a young lady, at whose simplicity Mr. Grimgrin smiled, and Miss Thugge sniffed.

"He should have made it at once, then," said Mr. Grimgrin, "instead of standing dumb before his accusers. After explanations don't go for much in such cases."

"Poor Edith!—it will break her heart," the young lady could not help adding.

"Pooh!" said Mr. Grimgrin; "as you will find out some day, heart-breaking is only a figure of speech."

Leaving the rest of Miss Thugge's party to laugh, and the young lady to blush, at Mr. Grimgrin's sententious observation, let us go back a step.

Ernest Jasper, whose arrest for forgery was just now the subject of conversation, had hitherto borne an unblemished character. He and his brother George, out of moderate salaries, after supporting their widowed mother, managed to lay up something every year, and each was looking to a happy time—not far distant, he hoped—when certain tender engagements would no longer need to be deferred.

The course of truthful love never ran smoother than in the case of Ernest Jasper and Edith Wade. Too trusting to allow mischief to be made between them, and too gentle to make it between themselves, what could disturb the even tenor of two such lives?

George Jasper was of a different temper from his brother. With a heart as true, he was more impulsive and passionate. It is such men that are easily incited to jealousy, and who act rashly under it.

When George Jasper and Mildred Heath plighted their troth, they would have staked their lives on each other's loyalty. But evil tongues came between them. Stories which should have been scorned—and were so at first—in time began to be listened to. Then came quarrels and reconciliations, time and again repeated, till at last it was insinuated to George that he had a rival in his love. He demanded an explanation in a tone so imperious that Mildred's pride took offence, and she answered it with silence. They parted in anger, and George's visits ceased.

A few days later, a cool note from Mildred informed him that all was over between them. In his bitterest moments he had not counted on this. It came upon him like a thunder-clap. His first impulse was to fly from the scene of his misery—whither he cared not—the further the better.

A letter, received through the post-office, announced to Ernest his brother's departure.

"Leaving on you," the letter went on, "the burden of our mother's support, I inclose you my employer, Mr. Winter's, check for all my savings over the necessary expenses of my journey. I cannot tell you where I am going, for I do not know. To you and our mother—the only ones to whom I have the right to offer it—I leave my fondest love. Farewell."

It was the check thus inclosed, which, on being presented by Ernest, was ascertained to have been altered to a larger amount.

On being questioned, Ernest offered no explanation. Instantly it flashed upon him that he could not speak without compromising his brother, and his silence was construed as a confession of guilt. He was at once arrested and committed for trial.

Silas Grimgrin was a post-office clerk, moral beyond his years, and with a conscience tenderly alive to the sins of others. We have already seen how little lenity poor Ernest received at his hands.

Mr. Grimgrin had just returned from Miss Thugge's party, and, in his bachelor apartment, was regaling himself with a cigar and divers reflections on the vanity of human wishes, when a knock announced a visitor.

"Come in," said Silas, glancing over his shoulder.

Stooping to clear the door-way, a young man entered, a fellow-clerk of Silas, at least six feet two in height, with a good-natured, but not particularly bright looking countenance.

"Good-evening, Mr. Grimgrin."

"Good-evening, Bunce," said Silas. "Pray, lower yourself on the sofa there, for your head must be dizzy at that height."

Mr. Bunce smiled at the joke; it was an old acquaintance.

"What do you think of Jasper's case?" he inquired, after a pause.

"There can be but one opinion," Silas answered.

"I have *mine*, at least," said the other.

"And what is it, pray?"

"That *he* is not guilty."

"Then who *is*?" said Silas sharply.

"*You!*" retorted Bunce, planting himself before the door, and displaying a badge, at the sight of which Silas trembled.

"What proof have you of such an accusation?" said Silas, recovering his presence of mind with an effort.

"Ample," replied the other. "Numerous peculations in the office here, induced the authorities to place it under surveillance; and, for a month past, I have occupied the post of detective under the guise of a clerk. Two days ago, unobserved, as you thought, you abstracted a letter directed to Ernest Jasper. Next day you returned it. An examination which I, as well as you, know how to make, proved that it contained a check—the same—for by a process of my own I was able to read its contents—to-day presented at the bank by Jasper, and now in my possession."

"But all that," argued Silas, "does not prove that I either opened the letter, or altered the check."

"As to the question of a letter's having been opened," said the detective, "an expert is not easily deceived. As to the alteration of the check, Mr. Winter, the drawer, is ready to swear that George Jasper inclosed it unaltered in his presence, and left the letter with him to mail; and *I* can swear that when it came to the hands of Ernest Jasper, the check was in its present state."

Silas Grimgrin stood mute and sullen.

"There is another charge against you," resumed the detective.

Silas started.

"To-day you opened a decoy letter containing money."

The guilty man made a movement as if to escape, but the towering form of the detective blocked his way. In an instant the snap of the handcuffs on his wrists was heard, and a brief search brought to light the identical bill taken from the decoy letter.

The poor wretch's courage failed, and he confessed all. He had stolen George Jasper's letter, not as he had others, for gain's sake, but to subserve another purpose. He too loved Mildred Heath, and had been mainly instrumental in breeding difficulties between her and her betrothed. To fix upon his rival the stigma of an infamous crime, seemed a sure way to secure the field permanently to himself. The fraternal devotion which prompted Ernest Jasper to sacrifice his own to his brother's reputation, was something a nature like Silas Grimgrin's was alike incapable of understanding or foreseeing.

The widow Jasper, Edith, and Mildred were all weeping tears of joy at once over Ernest, just released from prison, when George burst in among them.

"What! you here, Ernest?" he exclaimed. "I saw your arrest announced in the papers, and hurried back at once."

A word explained all.

And then George met Mildred's eyes looking so tearfully and lovingly into his own, that, forgetting all, he was about to clasp her in his arms.

"But that letter!" he said, drawing back with sudden constraint.

"What letter?"

"The one in which you declared all was over between us."

Mildred's surprise was a sufficient answer.

"Then that was another of Silas Grimgrin's forgeries!" cried George, instinctively guessing the truth.

Two happy weddings speedily followed. And we are pleased to be able to add that, as a husband, George Jasper isn't a bit jealous.

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Opium Eating in Schools.

Much indignation has been excited by the discovery that venders of opium are in the habit of surreptitiously sending it, prepared in candy and lozenges, to boys' and girls' schools, seminaries and colleges. A box of the preparation is sent to some pupil whose name has been ascertained, with a circular containing directions for its use. The circular also sets forth, in glowing terms, the advantages to be derived from the use of the candy or lozenges. Among those advantages is alleged to be such a sharpening of the mind as will enable the pupil using the preparation to get his or her lessons with but little mental effort, and to carry off the prizes with perfect ease. Such a lure as that is almost sure to catch idle young people, and ambitious pupils also. The habit of using the opium once established, the victim is unable to shake it off; and the beloved son or daughter, all unknown to the parents at home, lays the foundation for a wrecked life and a blighted career. Sometimes the pupils communicate the secret to their intimate associates, and the school becomes largely infected with the pernicious practice.

Men who seek, by thus stealthily creating an appetite in them for opium, to ruin the minds and bodies of the young, deserve the severest punishment. The evil is a frightful one, and parents and teachers cannot be too vigilant in guarding against it.

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A Touching Letter from a Brakeman's Wife.

HARRISBURG, Pa., August 15, 1872.

MR. EDITOR: I have just been reading, in this week's *Ledger*, page four, the piece entitled, "A Wrong that Should be Righted." I cannot thank you enough for writing that. I am the wife of a brakeman on the railroad; and Oh, the dread and horror I suffer day after day, thinking of the danger he is exposed to, knowing not what moment the word may be brought to tell me he is killed! The only peaceful moment I have is when he comes home of an evening. Then my heart thanks God that He watched over and guarded him through the dangers of another day. And as you say, if a railroad employe is killed, the jury always bring in their verdict that "no blame attached to the railroad corporation or its employes," when most of the time it could be proved that it was carelessness in one way or the other that caused it. But the officers of the road do not care. What is it to them if a man is killed? There are plenty more to fill his place. They do not think or care for the agony that his family must suffer to have him snatched from them in such a manner, or for the poverty and horror they may suffer afterward in trying to provide where his hands had always provided before. A few weeks since the conductors' wages were raised, but the brakemen's wages remain the same, and they are little enough, for the danger they are exposed to. My husband is on the Pennsylvania Railroad, and brakemen's wages here are $1:90 a day—little enough, though more, I am told, than on other roads.

I have often wondered have the officers no hearts, or why do they not try to protect their men from danger, and pay them better too, as a small recompense for the risk to their lives; for if the men could know that their families would not suffer if anything should happen to them, they would work more cheerfully and better. But if a man is crippled doing his duty—*mind, in doing his duty*, working for them, helping to bring in those millions of dollars which supply their luxuries, why, as his name is struck off the books, so it is struck out of their memory, and he is left to suffer in poverty, and even to starve, for all they care. Oh, Mr. Editor, as you have so nobly spoken against the great wrong done to employes on railroads, try to do still more for them. If a railroad corporation could be made responsible for the men killed and crippled in working for them, it would not happen so often, for they would provide safeguards so it would not be so dangerous. Try and see if you cannot rouse up the conscience of the officers toward their men. I know you feel for the sorrows of others, and God has and will bless you for trying to do good to your fellow-men. I could not resist the impulse to write to you, and thank you for that article. I know it has reached thousands of hearts burdened with the same sorrow as mine.

May the Lord strengthen you to speak and work for the oppressed. Yours truly,

SADIE C. UNDERWOOD.

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How Two New Yorkers Shot a Deer.

[From the Turf, Field and Farm.]

This is the way two young gentlemen, who live in the city of New York, shot a deer. There had been a slight fall of snow, and this, they reasoned, would enable them to track the antlered buck to its lair. Valiantly they went forth in the woods. Not more than a quarter of a mile from the country house they crossed a path, and in that path they saw fresh foot-prints. They examined these foot-prints with great care, and finally concluded that they were the tracks of an enormous stag. All excitement, our two hunters started on the war path. The path wound around a hill. Very stealthily they now advanced, for they might come upon the deer at any moment. They hear a noise; they catch a glimpse of something red in the distant brush-wood. Rifles are cocked and carefully aimed. A sharp report is followed by a commotion in the brush and loud bellowing. Pale with emotion, the two hunters advance, and then the awful truth dawns upon their minds that they have shot the cow of a neighboring farmer. Strange to say, these valiant huntsmen do not look pleased when allusion is made to their deer-hunting adventure.

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—A lady of fashion will sooner excuse a freedom flowing from admiration, than a slight resulting from indifference. The first offence has the pleasing apology of her attractions; the last is bold, and without an alleviation.

THE BEGGAR AT THE GATE.

BY DR. C. D. GARDETTE.

The dusty road is all aglow
With sun-flame from the summer sky;
With dripping flanks and heads hung low,
The hot steeds drag their burdens by.

I pity them, but cannot aid.
They look and long, but pass, I trust,
To their appointed rest and shade,
Beyond the sun glare and the dust.

While I, beneath the boughs that span
The massive gateway's arch of stone,
A moody, miserable man,
Lie in the shadows, pale and prone.

For here, beneath the lindens twain
That all the place with shadow fill,
I look and long, and reach in vain
For that which is beyond me still—

For joys from which I seem to be
Still locked and barred by fear or fate—
When, lo! through half-closed lids, I see
A beggar halting at the gate.

A spent and broken wretch he seems;
The rusted latch he scarce can raise;
A dusty halo round him gleams,
And 'leave to rest a while,' he prays.

"Rest? Aye! It seems a little gift;
Yet, if the bolts that from me hold
My rest, should'st teach me thus to lift,
Thy pathway hence should be of gold!"

He smiled a wan and weary smile:
"Your golden guerdon comes too late;
I only need to rest a while,
Within the shadow of your gate."

He smiled a brighter, stranger smile,
And feebly bent his hoary head,
And laid him down to rest a while,
And lo! I looked, and he was dead!

So then I knew that this was best,
And that we wander still, and wait
Till we shall come for leave to rest,
As beggars, at the Eternal Gate!

THE BLACK DOCTOR;

OR, THE

Prophecy of the Voodoo King.

AN HISTORICAL TALE OF THE SPANISH RULE IN LOUISIANA.

By **WILLIAM HENRY PECK,**
Professor of History in the University of the State of Louisiana.

CHAPTER XXI.

MERCITA RECOGNIZES THE VOODOO CANE.

The date of our story here is 1796.

As Mercita entered the presence of her mistress, she cast a quick glance toward Adraste Scipian, who had withdrawn with a shuffling step to one corner of the apartment, where he stood in a posture of exceeding humility, his eyes cast down, his hands crossed behind him, his body stooped far forward.

In one hand he held his battered old hat; in the other he held his cane—the serpentine, skull-headed Voodoo cane that had once belonged to Syphaxo, the slave of Sancho Perez.

This was the first time that this cane had been seen in the Varlville mansion. Adraste Scipian had it not with him when he first began his attendance upon Madame Varlville, nor had he since, till to-day, brought it with him.

In the posture in which he stood as Mercita entered, she could not see the cane. Either by design or by chance, he held the cane in such a manner as to hide it from the view of Mercita.

She had not seen it when she ushered him into the room, half an hour before, and left him there with her mistress; for at that time Adraste Scipion carried it hidden under his long and tattered cassock—hidden by design or by chance.

As yet, this cane of the dead Voodoo king had been seen in New Orleans by but five persons. These five persons were Sancho Perez, Ivan, Don Sebastian, old Juan, and Madame Varlville.

The reader will therefore perceive that this "Adraste Scipian" before Madame Varlville, was either Sancho Perez, Ivan, Don Sebastian, or old Juan. From what has been told of the latter, the reader is well aware that Adraste Scipian was not old Juan.

But the four—Sancho Perez, Ivan, Don Sebastian and old Juan—were now in or near New Orleans.

And so was the Voodoo chest.

Mercita cast a quick glance toward Adraste Scipian, shuddered either from fear, disgust, or some deep antipathy to the man, and then courtesied to her mistress with that air of profound respect which all in that mansion observed toward Madame Varlville at all times.

"Madame rang for me?" said Mercita, in her sad sweet voice.

"Yes, Mercita. How is it that I have only just heard that one of my servants died during my late illness?" asked Madame Varlville, in a severe tone.

"He forbade, Madame," replied Mercita, with a slight gesture toward Adraste Scipian. "Master Adrian, head of the house while you were unconscious, and Master Leon being absènt, commanded all to obey the orders given by him"—another gesture toward Scipian—"and he ordered that the death of Media should be kept a secret from you until he should see fit to inform you."

There was a jingling of tiny bells from Scipian's corner as he bowed, and his sharp, wiry voice, toned very low, remarked:

"If I may be permitted to speak, Madame, I would say that I feared the tidings of the sudden death of an old servant might be too great a shock to Madame. Madame is aware how cautiously I have made the fact known to her."

"Very true, Adraste Scipian, and you acted wisely. Now, Mercita, tell me something of Media's death."

"She died suddenly, Madame," replied Mercita, "but that did not suprise us, as she was very old."

"I think overeating killed her," said Scipian quickly, and with his back toward Mercita.

"Overeating!" exclaimed Mercita, in scorn, and not looking toward Scipian.

"Overeating in the kitchen," said Scipian humbly.

"She had not eaten anything in the kitchen, Madame. Indeed I do not believe, Madame, she ate a mouthful there, nor in the mansion," replied Mercita, looking only at her mistress.

"Orange," said Scipian doggedly, and in the raspy, harsh tone he had always used when in Mercita's hearing.

"Orange! Oh, Madame, it is true that poor old Media did eat the confection in the room of Master Vargas, and Clara said Media was drinking when she fell. But who ever heard of a little orange and sugar hurting anybody?" replied Mercita. "Overeating indeed! Poor old Media died of old-age and excitement. I wonder that I did not die myself!"

"And Madame Ruth would have died had not Master Adrian Dudley agreed that I should try to restore her to life," said Scipian, half aloud.

"I admit," replied Mercita, "that I said and believed that Scipian could do nothing for Madame. I have no faith in Voodooism, nor in Voodoo doctors, Madame."

"Yet, Mercita," remarked Madame Ruth, who in many respects treated this favorite servant more as a friend than as a slave, "you must now admit that my life was saved—ah!" added Madame Ruth, shuddering, "more than merely my life was saved by this man, a Voodoo doctor! But for Adraste Scipian, I should have been entombed while yet alive, and, Grand Ciel! the agony of returned consciousness would have come upon me in the grave!"

"In the grave, Madame," said Scipian; "and though in reality your after existence there would have been but momentary, that moment of regained consciousness would have been to you, body and soul, a hundred ages of indescribable horror. I once knew a man who had been hanged, and who was cut down by his rescuers ere he had been suspended ten seconds. Madame, he swore to me that those ten seconds had seemed to him, as he strangled in the jaws of death, ten thousand years of horrible bodily and mental agony. During those ten seconds of darkness to real life, he said he saw the sun rise and set a myriad times, and years on years come and go, and ages roll on in endless ranks, while he could not die, but knew he was to die, and was dying in the awful torture of the accursed rope. Madame, it was from such horrors of living death and dying life, that Adraste Scipian has had the fortune, and the power, and, Madame, the *wish*, to rescue you."

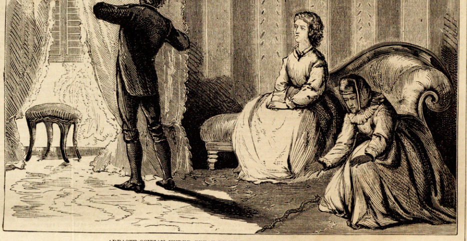
Scipian emphasized the word wish. Madame Ruth knew the meaning he intended to convey thereby—that though he, Adraste Scipian, had had the will to save her from this terrible death, there were those, or there was at least one, the poisoner, who would have thrust it upon her.

"I shall be—I am grateful to you, Adraste Scipian—and to *le Bon Dieu!*" said Madame Varlville, in a low and tremulous voice, and much affected by Scipian's impressive words, and especially overcome by the power of his gaze as he uttered them.

But Mercita had also had her attention greatly aroused by this emphasis upon the word *wish*. Her hearing was acute and refined. Hitherto disposed to regard all Voodoo doctors as mere charlatans, and having conceived a profound antipathy toward Adraste Scipian from the moment she had first seen him, five days before, and having since that day avoided his presence as much as possible while he prescribed for her mistress, she knew little of his command of ideas and language.

She had never yet addressed a word to Scipian directly, since his appearance in the Varlville mansion. He had often spoken to her, in his medical position upon her mistress, but Mercita, scorning, or fearing, or loathing the very presence of the man, had never even once replied directly to him, nor turned her face toward him.

At first sight of Adraste Scipian, and without suspecting that he was other than he professed to be, Mercita had experienced keenly that crawling, shuddering sensation which one feels in suddenly perceiving a hideous and venomous serpent, which, though at the moment caged and boxed in glass, lives sweltering with venom, and may yet strike with fatal fangs.



ADRASTE SCIPIAN UNDER GREAT EXCITEMENT DROPS THE VOODOO CANE.

This disagreeable sensation had not decreased in Mercita's mind, although it had fixed itself there simultaneously with her first sight of Adraste Scipian. She had mocked at herself in secret, and tried to resolve her first impressions of the man into the sentiment of contempt—such as she had ever had for all charlatans, whether white or black, whether Ollapods or Voodoos. In this she had failed. The image of Adraste Scipian in her mind, or in her eyes, she could not view with contempt. To her its real or remembered presence seemed to say:

"Adraste Scipian is one to be feared—and especially by you, Mercita!"

Therefore she had avoided not only speech with him directly, but also being noticed by him.

And she did this because, as she had said to her mistress, "I cannot see this man without shuddering; and I shudder because there is that about him, I know not what, nor why I perceive it, which reminds me of a man whom I hope is dead."

As we observed before, her hearing was acute and refined. She detected instantly the slight but significant emphasis made by Adraste Scipian upon the word *wish*.

She turned slightly and faced the man. He also had faced toward her, and the cane of the dead Voodoo king, its head carved to represent a human skull, and its serpentine shape, in her full view.

He was not leaning upon it, but while its ferrule was on the floor, two of his fingers and a thumb, placed on its head tip, held it perpendicularly erect, and gave it a twirling motion.

As if a live serpent erect on the tip of its tail, and convolving upward in increasing and then decreasing spirals, the Voodoo cane revolved rapidly.

That cane had been seen by Mercita twelve years before. She had seen it in the cabin of the *Doubloon*, where Sancho Perez had left it when, in obedience to the written command of the mysterious Isadora Raymundo, he had resigned his cabin for its occupation by Mercita.

It had become familiar to her during that lonely voyage across the Gulf of Mexico. She had often handled it, and studied admiringly the mystic names as well as hideous carvings put upon it by Syphaxo and those African Voodoo kings from whom it had descended to Syphaxo as an heir-loom and as a sceptre. She had sufficient knowledge of the blacks of the West Indies to know that the cane was what they called "fetish," that is, sacred or supernatural. She supposed, and correctly, that the cane had once belonged to some slave Voodoo owned by Sancho Perez; and incorrectly imagined that Perez had preserved it in his cabin as a curiosity. At the same time she had read on the cane the name of the person by whose will she was being conveyed to New Orleans—ISADORA RAYMUNDO—carved or deeply scratched into the hard wood by Sancho Perez, as the reader has been told. She had started in great surprise as she saw that name, to which, for the time, Sancho Perez was so obedient a slave. But after much reflection, and perceiving that the carving of the name was freshly made, she had correctly concluded that Perez had himself cut it there, after he had received those written orders whose tenor he was then obeying to the very letter.

Mercita was well aware of the fate of Perez after his return from New Orleans to Cuba. She had learned that he had been arrested, acquitted of the murder of Angelos Rio, but convicted upon other charges, and sentenced for life to the quicksilver mines of Almeida.

At the date of Scipian's admittance to the Varlville mansion, she believed either that Perez was still a convict in those mines, or that he was dead.

She hoped that he was dead, for she feared and detested the man. She had never forgotten his fierce vow of vengeance against Isadora Raymundo, and his ferocious wrath toward herself, as he and she parted twelve years before.

After that parting, she had not felt safe from his menaced revenge until she learned that he had sailed as a convict in irons on the *De Gama* for Spain.

The Voodoo cane in the hand of Adraste Scipian startled her, and for an instant she gazed at it, and not at him, with dilated eyes.

For the first time since his entrance into that house, for the first time for more than twelve years, Adraste Scipian, whether he was Sancho Perez, Ivan, or Don Sebastian, now had a full view by clear light of the features of Mercita.

But, as we have been careful to intimate already, Mercita wore a kind of head-dress both Turkish and Egyptian in its style. It covered the whole of her head to her eyebrows in front, like a turban, and her ears, cheeks and neck behind, like the ancient head-tire of Egyptian women; and her throat was buried to the chin in a snow-white ruff of many plaits or flutings.

Nevertheless, whether Adraste Scipian was Sancho Perez, or Ivan, or Don Sebastian, and although so little of Mercita's features could be seen by him as she stared at the cane with dilated eyes, he started violently, staggered back a pace, let fall the cane, and wheeling clear around so as to present his back to Mercita and to Madame Varlville, griped his bosom over his heart with both hands, and trembled as if in a chill as sudden as it was acute.

The Voodoo cane fell upon the floor, and rolled swiftly to Mercita's feet.

She picked it up with an involuntary eagerness, and flashed her inquiring glance to that part of it where she remembered the name "Isadora Raymundo" was on the cane she had seen on the *Doubloon*.

The name was not there; but the scar made by the file which had erased it in the shop of the pawnbroker was there where the name had been, deep and plain.

Mercita's glance, as quick as lightning itself, and with a memory as retentive as of yesterday, flashed over the cane from head to ferrule.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she exclaimed mentally, and dropping the cane. "'Tis the cane of Captain Perez! Why is it here—and with Adraste Scipian—him whom I fear?"

Neither Madame Varlville nor Scipian heard her words, but the former, already startled by the strange conduct of the latter, who stood trembling and griping his breast with his back toward her and Mercita, arose in alarm from her chair as Mercita dropped the cane and sank to the floor as if in a swoon.

CHAPTER XXII.

MADAME VARLVILLE RECOGNIZES THE CANE.

Madame Varlville uttered an exclamation of alarm, and was about to seize the bell cord, when Adraste Scipian said quickly:

"Ah, Madame! call no one! It is nothing. All of my color fear that cane. It is a sacred thing!"

"Not to Mercita, who has none of the superstitions of her race," exclaimed Madame Varlville, about to advance to raise or assist the recumbent woman.

"Permit me; Madame is ill—Madame is too weak! Mercita has only swooned," said Scipian, restraining the intended movement of the lady by quickly placing himself between her and the prostrate Mercita. And as Madame Varlville, weak from recent illness, and exhausted by sudden excitement, sank back into her chair, he added in a deep whisper, and with his face toward the lady:

"Madame, this woman is the poisoner! To her this vial of poison—the poison from which you still suffer, the poison by which Media died—can be traced."

Scipian made no movement toward restoring Mercita to consciousness, but held the purplish vial toward Madame Varlville.

"Grand Ciel! is it possible! Can it be possible!" murmured the lady, amazed. "Did you find the vial in her room?"

"Madame, she will be conscious in a moment," replied Scipian, evading the question, and at the same time trying to take off the head-dress of Mercita. "She must hear nothing of the charge yet, Madame. Send her from the room the moment she recovers—"

Mercita's head-dress had not been put on to fall off, nor to be easily taken off; it was so made that one not familiar with its fastenings could not readily remove it. She regained her consciousness before Scipian was able to remove her head-dress; and recognizing the attempt to take it off ere she remembered where she was, or who was near her, she sprang to her knees, drew a dagger, and glared at Scipian with that wild look we may see in the eyes of a person just starting into bewildered consciousness from a terrible nightmare.

"*Mon Dieu!* She draws a dagger!" exclaimed Madame Varlville, too weak to lift her hand to the bell cord.

The sound of the voice of her mistress collected the scattered and disordered faculties of Mercita.

She sprang to her feet, flashed a glance of terror toward Scipian, instantly readjusted her head-dress, which Scipian's clumsy efforts to remove had pulled awry, hid her dagger in the bosom of her dress, and then kneeling on one knee near the chair of her mistress, said, in her soft, sad voice:

"Pardon, Madame!"

"Pardon for what, Mercita?" asked Madame Varleville, in a cold and suspicious tone.

"I think—I think I fainted, Madame."

"Yes, you swooned, Mercita. Why?"

"Ah, Madame," replied the kneeling slave, shuddering, "that hideous cane of the Voodoo doctor, which I chanced to pick up, seemed to become a living serpent in my grasp! Oh! it was horrible! I cast it from me! I know no more! Was I long in the swoon, dear mistress?"

"Madame will not forget my caution to avoid too much excitement," said Scipian, who stood behind Mercita, and making a gesture which Madame Varlville understood to mean, "Send Mercita from the room."

But Madame Varlville did not see fit to comply at once, but said to Mercita:

"How dare you draw a dagger in my presence, Mercita?"

"Pardon, Madame! I did not know what I was doing. I will never so offend you again."

"How dare you carry a dagger about your person, Mercita?"

"Ah, Madame does not know—" began Mercita; but she checked herself instantly, and added, "Pardon, Madame. It was indeed very wrong. I should have obtained your permission to carry a weapon."

"That indeed!" said the haughty old lady, whose faith in the virtues of Mercita was now greatly shaken. "Of course you, who are so well educated, know that it is a crime for a slave to carry a concealed weapon—a crime which the law punishes with the scourge, whether the criminal be man or woman, and with long imprisonment. Besides, one who carries a concealed dagger, may also have vials—concealed vials of poison."

Scipian, not pleased with this last remark, again made that gesture which besought Madame Varlville to send the slave from the room.

But Mercita, ignorant of this gesture, exclaimed:

"Concealed vials of poison, Madame!"

"Why not?" continued Madame Varlville severely. "A concealed dagger lies near a heart that is always ready to kill. It is no less latent murder than that in a vial of poison."

Madame Varlville's grand black eyes studied keenly the features of the kneeling slave as she spoke thus, but Mercita's features expressed only painful bewilderment; and to herself, Mercita said:

"Ah, the mind of Madame has been affected by her illness. It wanders. She does not know what she is saying."

"Scipian," continued Madame Varlville, in a cold and sarcastic tone, "give to me that cane—your Voodoo cane!—and let us see if it will turn to a living serpent in my hands."

Scipian, standing behind Mercita, and bowing so that his bells chimed loudly, grasped the cane near its ferrule, and reached the head of the cane toward Madame Varlville.

As the cane was thus passed over Mercita's shoulder, and near her left temple, she shuddered; for to her it seemed as if the cane were a living serpent gliding in convolutions over her body from the hand of Adraste Scipian to that of Madame Varlville.

And Madame Varlville, despite her careless scorn for Voodooism, and all that appertained to its barbarous rites or absurd juggleries, did not grasp the cane without a visible shudder of her whole frame.

But this shudder was because of a memory of something terrible to be remembered by Madame Varlville—something that had happened nearly forty years before—the sacrifice of her only son by Voodoo priests of the coast of Africa, to their idols.

Let us speak of this for a moment, that the reader may fully understand why Madame Varlville loathed even to detestation Voodooism and all its bearings, and why the sight and then the touch of the cane of the dead Voodoo king caused her to shudder in every nerve with mental agony.

In the diary of her husband—who we have stated had been dead thirty years at the opening of this story—was recorded a narrative of the shipwreck of himself, wife, and only child at that time, a son aged about five years. In this narrative the following was written:

"The Voodoo king, whose name, as the savages uttered it, seemed to be Okee-obi-oki, while we were his captives, one day made known to me, partly by signs and partly by means of his broken Portuguese—in which language he could speak a little—that he suspected me to be a great magician in my own country, and that he wished me to carve upon his sacred cane a Voodoo sceptre, his name, and after it my own, as he fancied the fetish virtues of his sceptre would be notably increased. My fortune in having cured his eldest son of a slow fever which had long baffled the absurd medical incantations of himself and all inferior Voodoo doctors of his region, had doubtless caused Okee-obi-oki to think I was a famous Voodoo in my own country. I of course consented, being glad to do anything to conciliate the king, who seemed to be far more inclined than any of his people, to send me and my family to a part of the coast where a Spanish vessel was trading with the natives at the time. Okee-obi-oki then brought their great Voodoo staff or sceptre to me, and bade me carve his name and mine thereon."

Here the narrator gave a minute description of the Voodoo cane—which we need not repeat, as it was the cane of Syphaxo—and continued:

"I carved on the cane the name of the Voodoo king in Roman letters, thus: 'OKEE-OBI-OKI'—for so he and his people pronounced it to my ear—and after it I carved in the same way my full name, ADRIAN HENRI VARLVILLE, and RUTH, the Christian name of my wife, and also the date, 1756; the name Ruth in Hebrew script."

Further on in this narrative, of which we quote nothing that does not bear upon the plot of our story, were these words:

"On the day following, the Voodoo king officiated as chief at one of their horrible adorations of their principal idol, at which I and my wife and our little Henri were forced to be present. It was a terrible scene, for no less than three captives, natives of a tribe with which that of Okee-obi-oki was at war, were led naked and bound before the idol, and these were struck each on the head a savage blow, one after another, and then beaten to death with clubs. The Voodoo king struck each captive the first blow, and with the cane I have described. After the execution the Voodoo priests had a grand dance and feast, in which the people shared. Among other things these cannibals devoured the cooked bodies of the three executed captives."

And still further on in the diary of Dr. Adrian Henri Varlville, as follows:

"At last the Voodoo king came to us, and told us that we were to set out with an escort to the coast at once, but that our son should be held as a hostage for our faith until the return of our escort with the promised ransom. I dare not attempt to describe the agony with which I and my dear wife bade farewell to our beloved son. But we were forced to leave him, as Okee-obi-oki insisted upon such measures."

And now one more extract from the diary of Dr. Varlville:

"I returned, after a week's absence, to the town of Okee-obi-oki, having with me the promised ransom; but my son I never was to see again. Alas! during my absence the thrice accursed Voodoo priests had sacrificed my tender darling boy to their idols! So Okee-obi-oki and his tribe told me, and I could not doubt it. To insure the charm upon his cane, begun by my having cut his and my name upon it, the Voodoo king told me triumphantly that he had slain my boy with that accursed staff! And this was the burden that I had to bear to my wife, the adoring mother of the murdered boy, that the Africans, Voodoo devils incarnate, had slain and devoured our only son, our then only child!"

The reader now must perceive why Madame Varlville had so deep-rooted an antipathy toward Voodooism, and why the mere sight of the Voodoo cane so agitated her.

But as yet she had not recognized the fact that this cane of Adraste Scipian was the same cane on which, nearly forty years before, her husband had carved the name of its then owner, the ferocious and cannibal Voodoo king, Okee-obi-oki.

That name was still on the cane, clear and distinct; so was the name Ruth—the latter in Hebrew. Gomaza, the pawnbroker, familiar with the Hebrew script, had often wondered how a Hebrew name in Hebrew script had been carved upon the cane, and had asked old Syphaxo, who had replied, "Great white Voodoo cut it dar years ago," and said no more of it.

The name Adrian Henri Varlville was almost obliterated. Carvings and scars made upon the cane after Dr. Varlville had cut his name upon it, had cut into, across and upon the letters of his name; so that when it, with old Syphaxo—who was Okee-obi-oki himself—were captured by Sancho Perez, in one of his slave kidnapping expeditions, only a few letters of Dr. Varlville's name could be distinguished. To an uninformed eye, these letters presented only the appearance of having been cut into the hard wood at random.

The date cut by Dr. Varlville had also been nearly destroyed, and but two figures remained—1 and 7.

These names and the date, such as was left of them, had been cut by Dr. Varlville on a part of the cane which began near its head, and ended at about the middle, or half-way down toward the ferrule. The cutting of course followed the spiral or serpentine form of the cane.

As Madame Varlville received the cane from Adraste Scipian, she did not at first perceive clearly anything that was carved upon it. Indeed, the sudden remembrance of the fate of her only son, connected as it was with such a cane, not only caused her to shudder, but also to close her eyes for an instant.

"With such a horrible club," she said mentally, as she grasped the cane and laid it across her lap, "the savage negroes of the Guinea coast crushed the head of my darling Henri!"

With her eyes still closed, as if to gaze mentally upon the past, her whole soul went back to the hour when she last embraced the adored child whose fate had been so terrible.

"They killed thee, *mon Henri!* They devoured thee—the hideous black cannibals! Oh, God!" she moaned, and great tears of grief ineffable welled from her closed eyelids.

"Of whom does she speak?" thought Adraste Scipian; for the above lamentation of the unhappy mother was audible.

"Madame! My dear mistress!" exclaimed Mercita, surprised, for never before had she seen Madame Varlville shed a tear, or heard her utter a moan; and of that which was set down in the diary of Dr. Varlville, Mercita knew nothing.

Madame Varlville opened her eyes, which were swimming in tears, wiped those tears away with her snowy handkerchief, and sighing as if her heart was about to be drawn from her bosom, cast her eyes upon the Voodoo cane, as it lay across her lap.

The next instant her eyes dilated with horror, and fixed themselves in a stare of terror upon the cane.

She saw there the name of the treacherous cannibal king who had immolated her adored son to his horrible Afric idols!—a name she abhorred—a name that had ever been, since that dread immolation of her boy, a thousand thousand times accursed in her heart—the name of the chief of those black cannibals, those savage man-eaters, who had slain and eaten her child!—the name *Okee-obi-oki!*—the very name that was that instant, ere she beheld it on the cane, being cursed in her soul with all a fond and bereaved mother's hate and impotent desire for vengeance!

She saw on the cane also these letters, with many a cut, dent, scar and carving separating them: "*d—an—H—V—l—e.*"

She recognized what only she of all who lived could recognize, the nearly obliterated name of her dead husband—all that was left of the name—"Adrian Henri Varlville," that he had carved on that accursed cane nearly forty years before.

She, a learned lady, and familiar with Hebrew script, read her own name, Ruth, which she had seen her husband carve on the cane with one of his surgical knives.

She saw too what was left of that date, of that dreadful year which bitter and corroding grief had forever gnawed into the very fibres of her brain and soul—the year when her darling boy was immolated and devoured!—the year 1756!

This triple recognition, and the fact—terrific and stupendous fact—that in her hands, by accident of Fate, was the accursed staff that had crashed the skull of her fair-haired, blue-eyed, tender boy, came not into her amazed perception in a single instant.

The recognition of the awful fact grew upon her perception by slow seconds during a long minute; and then she hurled the cane far from her, shrieking:

"*Grand Dieu!* It was with *this* that they beat out the brains of my son!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

* * *

—The sorrows of a noble mind are spring frosts, which precede the summer; those of a corrupt and contracted one are the autumn frosts, which are only followed by winter.

EVADNE.

BY EMMA ALICE BROWNE.

When all the shuddering woodlands rave,
Before a straining East wind bent,
And chanting seas break, wave on wave,
Beneath a moonless firmament,
Beyond the lonely belt of sand—
The dim sea crags—the breakers curled
About the low reef's pallid strand;
And far across the watery world,
Yearning I watch the dreary East,
Haply if some faint splendor rise,
Some token that the Night hath ceased,
Some prophecy of morning skies.
Sometimes the Eve's sad glories cling
About the spectral dawn of stars;
From the dim yeastly sea upspring
Wild winds that shake my lattice bars.
I lift a dark and bitter face
Unvailed to God's Immensity,
And utter to the Night a moan:
Thou, throned in vast and silent space,
Thou hidden light—for Thou canst see—
Thou knowest *what* Heaven is shut on me,
And *why* I walk this earth *alone!*

◆

MEHEMET ALI'S DAGGER.

AN ENGLISH DRAMA IN PROSE.

SCENE I.

Mr. George Playfair, an English merchant of great wealth, was one day sitting in his counting-house in Calcutta, looking over some complicated business papers. He was not in the humor to be interrupted. Just when he would most have wished to be alone, his chief clerk entered, and said that a man, a native, wished to see him particularly.

Mr. Playfair looked up, and said:

"Tell him to call another time, for I am very busy now."

A few moments after the clerk returned, saying:

"He tells me it is a matter of life or death, and that if you will see him he will not detain you many minutes."

"Did you ask his name?" inquired Mr. Playfair.

"Yes, sir; he said his name was Mehemet Ali Singh," replied the clerk.

"Well, show him in, Jones; but I know nothing of the man."

Jones did as he was directed, and Mehemet Ali was soon standing before the merchant. After a variety of oriental salutations, he began to explain the business that he had come about; but his English was so bad that Mr. Playfair, who happened to know the native language, requested him to speak in Hindustanee. The man complied, and soon explained his wishes. He stated that he was the representative of a Hindu family of fabulous antiquity; that he was the father of many children, all of whom were dead save one only daughter, a little maid of surpassing beauty, and that she was now lying at the point of death; and that, having lost his all in one of the numerous native feuds, he, Mehemet Ali, had no resources wherewith to provide medical aid, or even the necessaries of life for the child.

Mr. Playfair, thinking from this that Mehemet wished to obtain alms of him, and being a benevolent man, sought his purse. But the Hindu, a nobleman of nature's own stamping, drew himself up to his full height, and said:

"Let the English lord wait until he hears what his servant would say."

Mr. Playfair paused. The Hindu also hesitated. They looked one another full in the face, and then Mr. Playfair, beginning to recover himself, said:

"Well, Mehemet, tell me what you want. I'll do what I can for you; but don't, please, waste my time."

"My lord shall know," replied the Hindu in his own language, and looking so sadly that Mr. Playfair was touched, and said:

"Well, tell me what it is, and I will try to help you."

Mehemet, who pretended to speak as if unmoved, replied:

"I am now a poor man, as my lord sees; but once it was not so. Once my fathers had lands and palaces and servants, much gold and many wives—all that the heart of man could wish—but this day I, the son of a great race, am alone and have nothing. For myself, I would die; but little Fatima, can I see her die without help, without food, the last of my race? Only one thing I have: this dagger! It has jewels worth many rupees, but it is charmed. It is charmed for good to the house of Ali, but for evil to a stranger. I may not sell it, or I could soon get money. But I learned that my lord was rich. Will my lord lend his servant a few rupees, and keep the dagger till Mehemet may ask for it again?"

"Well, you see, I don't—" began the merchant. "I never lent money in that way," he went on. "If the jewels are genuine, you could easily get money of the—" he continued, when all at once the piteous face of the poor Hindu father knocked over all his prudence, and he said:

"I don't care a straw about your dagger. You can leave it, or take it away. But I think you are telling the truth, and I cannot see a man in real misery without helping him. Here are two hundred rupees. Get food and physic for the child. If you want more, come to me, and then I'll see properly into the case."

The Hindu bowed lowly as he heard the rough decree of the English merchant, and uttered countless thanks. He left his dagger and departed.

Some hours after, when the merchant was less busily engaged, a friend of his, a well-known Calcutta banker, came into his room and began to chat. Suddenly his eye lighted upon the dagger, which had remained unnoticed since the beggar left, and he said:

"I wonder that you leave this dagger about. It is fully worth from twenty to thirty thousand rupees."

"Are you *sure?*" exclaimed the merchant.

"Certainly," replied the banker. And then he entered into a long explanation needless to repeat here.

The merchant locked up the dagger in his safe. But he was not easy. He said to himself:

"I thought the dagger was only a dodge. I did not believe what the man said about the stones in it. I wish he had taken it away. I wish he would come for it."

The dagger troubled the merchant so much that he employed the police to find its owner, purposing to give him not only the weapon, but a good round sum of money. This he never did, though God will reward him for the intention, for the police reported that their utmost efforts had only resulted in finding the man dead, and that the child had died the very day that the man came to the office.

A few weeks after, Mr. Playfair left India for Europe. His wife had been dead for some years, and their only child, a little boy, was educated in England, and was now grown beyond childish years, and was bidding fair to become as stout a man as his father. When Mr. Playfair was introduced to a young lad of more than eighteen years, although he saw in him a likeness of himself in early days, he could hardly believe his own eyes. The retired merchant was, however, very proud of his son, and being almost as wealthy as he was proud, got on very well with him, which is saying much for his wealth, for his pride was no small matter.

SCENE II.

Time passed on, and young George fell in love with a poor American girl. Her father, who was nothing much to speak of, had taken her over to Europe in order to prosecute some claims to property there. He unexpectedly died, and she was left alone. With great difficulty she obtained a post as teacher in a school. It was indeed strange for a young American girl to be a stranger in England under such circumstances. Young George Playfair met her by chance, and fell in love with her in that wild and desperate fashion in which some men do fall in love once in their lives.

It was no easy matter for George to make love. His father's eye was ever upon him, almost absurdly affectionately, and Annie Lee, his heart's idol, was very much against secret meetings. At first she did not know his wealth or position, and thinking him as poor as herself, felt kindly toward him, and it was not until after the true position in which she was placed first clearly appeared to her, that she saw how unwisely she had acted, and *tried* to retrace her steps.

In vain! Young George loved her, and of course all her assumed devices—for she really loved him—failed. Her intentions were right, but after all she learned the truth of the poesie of Sir Walter, the "Great Unknown," who truly declares,

"Love is lord of all."

She agreed to see her lover, and do all that a lover could rightly wish, but upon the condition that before they were wedded, he should have the full consent of his kind and indulgent father.

Annie Lee was a beautiful girl, and had many lovers and admirers, but *she* had only one love, and a stranger in the land of her forefathers, she only thought of him.

One night after meeting the idol of her heart, she entered the long dark lane where she lived, in a pretty little cottage kept by a man named Whitton, but she would not let her lover go home with her, as she expected old Whitton or his wife might be coming up the lane to meet her.

The lovers parted in lovers' fashion.

The next morning the body of Annie Lee was found with a deadly dagger wound, life extinct, in that very lane. The body was cold and stiff when it was first discovered in a pool of blood. Life had long fled.

SCENE III.

George was frantic when he heard of the fearful crime. He went to the dead-house, whither they had carried the body, and wept bitterly over it. But, even in the anguished state of his mind, he was surprised at the change which had taken place in the features of the dead. A lover is always familiar with every shade and expression, every line and dimple of the beloved one's face; but the features of Annie Lee were so changed by death that George was greatly shocked. It appeared to him that the features were unnaturally changed. Old Mr. Playfair, although he had before refused his consent to the wishes of his son, now fully sympathized with him in his great grief, and acted a father's part in endeavoring to console him. The next day was appointed for the inquest, and it was agreed that they should attend it together, as Mr. Playfair had consented that George should claim the body of the friendless girl, and inter it with those unavailing honors with which we strive to show respect for the dead. The secret of George's love for the deceased was now generally known, and every one strove to show their sorrow for his loss.

The inquest was held at a tavern in the village, and after the jurors had examined the body they retired to a large room which was prepared for them, and proceeded to business.

The first witness called stated under what circumstances they had found the murdered girl.

George Playfair then stated, with evident emotion, how he had left her on the night when she was last seen alive. His deep sorrow excited the warmest sympathy of every one present in the crowded room.

Old Whitton and his wife testified that the girl had not returned as usual; that they had waited up long for her, and early in the morning, going up the lane to make inquiries, had found her dead, as already described. They swore to the identity of the body, but observed that a diamond ring which the deceased always wore, and which was a present from her lover, was not on her finger. This was the more singular as her purse was found in her pocket, and she had on at the time of the murder a singular cameo brooch, which no one had before seen her wear, and which George swore that, to the best of his belief, she had not worn that night. Strange to say, a packet of letters from her lover and a likeness of him, which it was said by old Mrs. Whitton, she always carried about with her, were not found either upon the body or in the little trunk which belonged to the deceased. This was, to say the least, singular, as, although the missing ring was valuable and might tempt a thief, yet her money, etc., had not been touched, and the portrait and letters could be of no possible use to any one but the owner.

Two other witnesses ought to have been present: one a young fellow-teacher, Jane Ellis, a girl about the same age as deceased, and greatly resembling her in appearance, and the other the teacher of the boys' school, John Hall. Jane had been the bosom-friend of Annie Lee, but had left the village for her home, as the holidays had now begun. She had gone very suddenly, without telling any one; but as she resided in the school-house, this excited little wonder, and it was supposed that a letter which she had received the morning before, had caused her sudden departure. The only person who felt aggrieved at this was a sturdy young farmer, who stated that she had said nothing to him of leaving so abruptly when he last saw her, on the very night of the murder. The other absent witness, John Hall, who was known to have greatly admired Annie Lee, was supposed to have escorted Miss Ellis on her journey, as their parents lived in the same town. It was concluded that they must have gone by the late night train, or a very early morning one. By the carelessness of the secretary of the school board, the addresses of Miss Ellis and John Hall had both been mislaid or lost, and no one knew whither to send for them; but as their testimony was of quite secondary importance, the coroner said there was nothing to prevent the holding of the inquest.

After the examination of the last witness, one of the jurymen asked the police sergeant:

"Was any weapon found near the body?"

"Yes, sir," said the officer; "did you not hear me tell his worship the crowner that that there odd lookin' dagger was found near the body?"

He pointed to the table. Every eye was fixed upon the dagger, which the coroner took up, observing that the marks of blood were plainly to be seen upon it.

At that moment George happened for the first time to notice the murderous weapon. His face became of a ghastly hue as he turned to his father, and exclaimed:

"Good God! Do you see that dagger, father?"

Mr. Playfair looked. His eyes could not deceive him. The dagger was unique; there were the glittering jewels and the name of its former owner in Hindustanee. *It was the dagger of Mehemet Ali!*

Then the words of the dead Hindoo came vividly to his mind:

"It is charmed for good to the house of Ali, but for evil to a stranger!"

The old man was not superstitious, but he too trembled and turned pale as he recognized his own dagger, and called to mind the long forgotten words of the Hindu.

A keen lawyer, well known to Mr. Playfair, and who was now present to assist in the investigation, noticed this, and whispered to the coroner, who had also observed the perturbation of the old merchant and his son.

"Mr. Playfair," the coroner said, "I have just been told that that dagger is yours. Can you give any account of how it left your possession, and came into the hands of a thief and murderer?"

Mr. Playfair was confused. He stood forward, and was rigidly cross-questioned. He acknowledged that the dagger was his; told how he had obtained it; said that it was so peculiar that he would know it among a thousand; and also stated that his son had borrowed it a few days before, to show to a young companion as a curiosity, but had not returned it. More he could not tell.

George, whose confusion was really pitiable, was next examined. He said he had shown the dagger, on the very night of the murder, to a young man named Reeve; that after it had been duly examined and talked about, he had put it carelessly into his pocket, and had ever since, in the great trouble which had befallen him, forgotten it. His evidence was given very reluctantly, and the crowd around him, who had so lately evinced their sympathy, now began to look upon him with suspicion.

It so chanced that young Reeve himself was present, and he was ordered to stand forth. He had begun to see the awkward position in which his friend was placed, and gave his evidence with great reluctance. He corroborated what George had said. He and Playfair attended, he stated, a sort of little village club. Playfair had told him of the dagger, and he had expressed a wish to see it. On the night of the murder, Playfair had shown it to him, and had then put it in his coat pocket. No one else was present except John Hall, and he had taken no part in the conversation. He expressed a perfect conviction that his friend was far above even the thought of a bad action. This last expression was quite uncalled for, as no one had yet spoken a word against George; but it showed what was passing in Reeve's mind, and added to the growing suspicion. Reeve also made some very damaging admissions, allowing that young Playfair had once asserted to him, when he was excited by his father's refusal to the love affair, that he would murder himself and the girl and all, before he would give her up. Reeve said he believed that this was only idle talk, spoken in anger; but it now told sadly against poor George.

The case certainly was strange. Young Playfair admitted that he was last seen with the girl when alive. He had spoken of killing her if thwarted. And his dagger had been found beside her body. The ring, etc., missing, *he* might have a motive for taking, but *what* motive could any one else have? Was it not very possible that, knowing his father would never consent, fearing a rival, or possibly after an angry quarrel with the girl herself, he had killed her in the heat of passion, and that his present evidently real sorrow was only an expression of despair?

So the jury thought.

They did not retire or consult, but gave in a unanimous verdict of "Willful murder against George Playfair." That was the newspaper story. "Willful murder" corresponds, in England, to "murder in the first degree" in this country.

The coroner, as in duty bound, gave the proper instructions. George was committed for trial. In England there would seem to be a greater value set on human life than in this country.

Here we have "three degrees" of murder. The name only is changed, and there they are called "willful murder," "manslaughter," and "justifiable homicide," which last means where one man kills another, as when he is attacked by thieves upon the road, or when his house is broken into, and in defence of himself or family he kills the intruding villain. Though of course, in such a case, his action may even be meritorious, he cannot be bailed; and even in cases of theft or forgery, bail is never accepted. He must go to jail until trial.

The scene at the inquest I dare not attempt to describe.

Old Mr. Playfair would have given his life to prevent his son from going to jail. He would have bailed him for an almost fabulous amount, and he had rich and powerful friends who would have helped him with fortune and influence. But in that country, where judges and justices are appointed for life—unless convicted of malpractices—political influence was of course in vain, and money was useless, as according to law, a person awaiting trial for willful murder cannot be bailed. The only use of money was to get the best of counsel, and that was done.

It so chanced that the Judges were just then in session at the Assize Court, and the trial was immediate. As for the son, stupefied by his great loss and affliction, and his own peculiar position, we cannot pretend to depict it. As for the father, he was bowed down with grief. He knew his son was as guiltless as himself, and in the agony of his sorrow he almost failed to understand the great affliction which had fallen upon him and his.

There was a young fellow, a clever, sharp young man, named Betts, to whom old Mr. Playfair had been very kind, and he resolved to search the matter to the bottom. Kindness is not always thrown away. Betts did wonders, as you shall presently see, though I shall say little about him.

SCENE IV.

The misery of the jail fell deeply upon George, accustomed as he was to a pleasant and easy life.

The judges were sitting, and a day appointed for the trial. Trials of this kind are never long delayed in England, and in this case it came on with unusual quickness. In less than a fortnight after the sudden committal of George his trial came on. The evidence produced upon the trial was much the same as that which we have already related, which caused the coroner's jury to return a verdict of "murder," and the magistrate to commit him, only it was amplified. Popular opinion was strongly against the prisoner. Every one thought that he had wronged the girl and had then murdered her, or else that, in a fit of desperation at his father's refusal, he had resolved that if he might not marry her, no one else should. His emotion at the discovery of her death was attributed to remorse. We need not enter into particulars of the evidence. The best counsel was employed on either side. Nearly four days were occupied in evidence, cross-questioning, and other usual details; and the result was a general impression that George Playfair had hitherto enjoyed an unblemished reputation, but had in a moment of anger yielded to his passions. His counsel made an eloquent appeal for him on the fourth day. On the fifth, the judge summed up. The jury retired, and after two hours' absence, returned to the court. Every one of the throng there gathered listened anxiously. The stillness was painful. The usual questions were put in the usual form, and a unanimous verdict returned of "willful murder." The judge demanded of the prisoner if he had anything to urge why sentence should not be passed upon him. George, who before had seemed lost in a twofold grief, in the troubles which had befallen him, now calmly looked up to the judge, and with a clear and self-possessed voice, said calmly:

"My lord, these twelve men believe and say that I am guilty. God knows that they err. If you, as God, could see my inmost soul, you would know that I would freely have given my life before a hair of her head should have been injured. May God forgive the iniquity of this sentence, for He knows that I speak truly when I say, in his sight, I am innocent!"

The judge assumed the black cap, and proceeded to pronounce sentence of death in the usual form. The prisoner was then removed to his cell, and the trial was over.

SCENE V.

Every effort was made, and all that money or influence could do was done to obtain a remission of the sentence. None of George Playfair's friends for a moment believed him guilty. All the outside world were fully assured of the justice of his sentence.

There was no hope for him.

The day appointed for the execution drew nigh.

Then it was that Betts, who has since shown so much talent, showed for the first time what he was capable of doing. He had been living in the same place, and knew intimately all the parties concerned. He was present, as we have seen, at the inquest, an acute observer, and he had examined the body of the dead girl. Then it was that an idea first entered his mind which he afterward turned to such excellent account. The moment the adverse verdict was pronounced by the coroner's jury against his friend, he left the court in haste. All the day long he was running to and fro about the village, and the last thing at night he started for a small town a few miles off. There he remained for about an hour, and then hiring a horse, he set out for a secluded part of the country many miles away. Just before daybreak, he stopped at a wayside tavern for a few hours' rest, and refreshment for himself and his beast, and then pursued his journey. Arrived at a rustic little village many miles from the great centres of population and industry, he left his beast at the solitary inn, and after making some inquiries, set out on foot. There was a lonely cottage standing by itself, far away from any other human habitation, toward which Betts made his way. For several hours he prowled about among the clumps of trees around the cottage. At last his patience was rewarded, for a man toward evening emerged, and after glancing carefully around to see that no intruder was at hand, carefully closed the door, and placing the key in his pocket, took the path toward the village.

Betts watched him in silence until his figure disappeared in the distance, and then, after a few moments' pause, so as to insure his being too far off to hear, he went boldly toward the cottage and knocked loudly at the door. He received no answer. He then made a careful survey of the exterior, and observed that one of the small windows at the back was covered with a very strong iron net-work, which a large tree had previously hidden from sight.

"Eureka!" he cried. "You've found it at last, my boy! Now for work!" And he did set to work with a will, for in less than two minutes he had climbed the tree and was on a level with the window, which he could readily touch. The net-work resisted every effort to remove it, but as he paused he could distinctly hear a loud cry within. It was only a single voice. He hastily descended and seized a large walking stick which he had brought with him, and again remounted the tree. The stick was not too thick to pass between the wires, and a pane of glass was soon broken. There was a stout blind within, nailed to the window-frame, but the stick easily perforated it. Betts then supported himself by the wires and looked in. There was a small night-light burning in the room, for though it was still daylight outside, the thick blind made all dark within. There was some one there to whom he spoke, but what answer he received, and how he acted, the following letter, received by Lord C——, the judge who had presided at the trial, a few days before that appointed for the execution, will explain:

"My Lord: I beg to lay before you the following statement, and as it is of the very utmost importance, I trust you will give it careful and immediate attention. Proper affidavits, sworn before the town authorities, are inclosed. The local magistrates will also attest the truth of this with their signatures.

"About the middle of last month a young girl, a native of the United States of America and teacher in a public school, was murdered. In consequence of certain evidence, the coroner's jury returned a verdict against the (supposed) murderer, George Playfair of N——. Early in June—the present month—your lordship tried the case, and George Playfair was sentenced to death. He is now awaiting execution in C—— jail, on the 2d of July.

"I know a little of Mr. Playfair junior, but have never been very intimate with him. The elder Mr. Playfair, however, has many times conferred lasting favors upon my family and myself. Hearing of his great trouble I attended at the inquest, thinking it possible that I might be of some service, but not expecting that my wishes would be so singularly fulfilled. Please to bear in mind that I am a native of the place, and know almost every one connected with the trial. On the day of the inquest I had an opportunity of examining the body. The features of the deceased were certainly those of Annie Lee, as I first thought; but upon more careful examination—to which I was excited by what I thought *then* was a strange alteration produced by death—I observed a curiously shaped mole over the left eye, and just beneath the hair of deceased. I had more than once joked with *Jane Ellis* about such a mole, but I never saw anything like it on Annie Lee. I suspected something. After mature thought I went to work.

"You must know that I had in the course of business become acquainted with some other matters which bore strongly on the case, but which could not have been given in evidence. The great debt of gratitude which I owed sharpened my wits. After an hour or two of thought and looking over some papers, and especially the consideration of certain stories which before I thought only idle scandal, I came to an idea. Jane Ellis, I found, had left to visit her friends in the holidays. But no one, upon *strict* inquiry, could tell me anything about her going away. John Hall, too, had left for good, but no one knew of his departure. A legacy had fallen to him, and he had given up his position in the school. At last I learned that on the night of the murder he had hired a close carriage, and had provided his own coachman. The carriage was returned, as agreed, the next day.

"Having, as I said, 'an idea,' and knowing that John Hall was a great admirer of Annie Lee, I thought there was more in this than at first appeared, and acted accordingly. After some very difficult inquiries, I found that Hall had taken a certain route. Only a few days before he had, as I knew, purchased a cottage in that part of the country. My idea was, that if I could find Hall I should have a clue to the mystery, and so I set out on my journey. The cottage was easily found. I watched the place secretly until I saw, as I had expected, Hall go out toward the village. After trying in vain to enter the cottage, at length believing some one to be confined in a room above, I broke the window, and there discovered Annie Lee, for whose murder you have sentenced George Playfair to be hanged. She was in the middle of the room, which was darkened. Round her waist there was a thin iron ring, attached to a small but strong chain, which utterly precluded the possibility of her approaching the window. In other words, she was a prisoner.

"She explained to me a few trifling matters. I left her and endeavored to effect an entrance. This was not easy. Windows and doors were all well secured. I noticed that one of the iron railings near the house was loose. I drew it out, and using it as a crowbar, forced the door. Miss Lee was soon at liberty, but she was so ill that it was with the utmost difficulty that I could take her to the nearest town. We then placed the matter in the hands of the proper authorities, who will attest this. But the whole affair is very mysterious.

(Signed) "Joseph Betts."

By the next post his lordship received another letter, of which the following is an extract:

"After what I have stated, you will see how the crime originated. Hall, being rejected by Miss Lee, became desperate. Just then he came into possession of property unexpectedly, and then gave up his situation. From his own account it would appear that he then conceived a romantic idea of attaining his wishes. He hired a lonely cottage, and obtained the services of one or two villains, who are now nowhere to be found. He then determined to abduct Miss Lee, if she would not accede to his wishes. He hired a carriage, and had everything in readiness. Prowling about the house on the night in question, and expecting her every moment, he at last saw a lady approach. The night was not very clear. He went up to the lady and proposed. He had his hand in his pocket, and to his astonishment found a 'knife' there. The girl was disdainful, and in a moment of anger he stabbed her and fled. Hearing footsteps approaching, he hid himself, and watched. Annie Lee was walking down the lane! He was not in the least superstitious; it could not be her ghost. No, he had missed his aim. He rushed out from the place of concealment, and seizing the girl, stuffed his handkerchief in her mouth, and hurried her off to the carriage in waiting. The coachman was a vagabond whom he had hired. With a little contrivance he got her to the cottage, and there in a very romantic way kept her prisoner till she should agree to marry him. * * *

"You see from the above what she endured. It was Jane Ellis who was murdered.

"One night after going out, leaving all secure, he returned and discovered that the bird had flown. Meanwhile he had discovered that in the darkness, thinking from their close resemblance that Jane Ellis was Annie Lee, he had really murdered the former. Remorse and fear seized upon him. He stabbed himself dangerously, was taken to the hospital, and after signing the paper which, with others, is inclosed, he died. I hear that other statements have been sent to your lordship, and remain, my lord,

"Yours, etc., J. Meddlicott, M. D."

George Playfair was reprieved. A thorough investigation proved his entire innocence, and he was not only acquitted, but every one vied with his fellow in striving to show sorrow for the ill done to the young man.

EPILOGUE.

Old Mr. Playfair's opinions underwent a very great change. He was now anxious that his son should repair the ills which poor Annie Lee had suffered, by a speedy marriage. The "nabob's" wishes were fulfilled. Poor George never forgot his carelessness in taking a wrong overcoat in mistake, at his club; but both he and his young wife, although they were too happy to care for aught but each other, never forgot the Dagger of Mehemet Ali. They are now living in New York city, the young husband preferring his wife's country to his own.

A. M.

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LILLIE'S LETTER;

OR,

THE ROMANCE OF A SEWING MACHINE.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

The back parlor of the Grenville farmhouse was so cool and delightful that warm August afternoon; the green shutters were bowed, and the white lace curtains, looped away with a green spray of ivy leaves, so that on the white matting that covered the floor, the sunshine flickered and quivered, as the light breeze waved the branches of the button-wood tree.

Beside the window, with the summer sunshine crowning her fair head in alternate light and shadow, Lillie Ransom sat sewing, pausing now and then to dash the tears from her eyes.

A lady, placid and beautiful in her white-haired old-age, sat knitting in an old-fashioned cushioned rocking chair, her hands never pausing in their busy career, even when she looked up to talk to the young girl.

"It seems so strange that you will not stay, child, when you know how welcome you are to the full and plenty at Grenville Farm."

Through her glasses the kind blue eyes, faded mayhap, but so patient and pure, looked anxiously on the girl's quivering lips.

"Grandma, I know just how dearly you all love me, and how good every one has been since—since mother died. But I can't stay, grandma, *indeed* I can't; it would drive me wild to feel I was not earning my own living."

The sweet blue eyes—very like Grandma Grenville's had been, fifty years agone—were turned imploringly to the old lady, who smiled cheerily.

"I am sure I will let you do all grandpa's linen shirts, Lillie; and what with a dress now and then for me, and your own sewing, you'd earn your living."

Lillie tried to smile, as she knew the kind old lady intended her to do; but her red lips suddenly quivered, and then, springing from beside her machine, she buried her sun-bright head in the folds of Grandma's white apron.

"I can't! I can't! Oh, I know you think I am ungrateful, but if you only knew—"

"Lillie!" and Mrs. Grenville's sweet voice broke upon the tempest of grief—"my child, did you think I did not know? Lillie, you are going away from Grenville Farm, not because you are too proud to take grandpa's bread, but because Oscar Wynde has broken your tender little heart."

The slender form shook like a reed in a strong wind, and Mrs. Grenville felt hot tears on the hand Lillie had imprisoned.

"Wasn't it cruel, cruel in him, just when mother died, and I so longing for his sympathy? If she had left me an heiress of thousands, instead of only this dear old sewing machine, he might not have deserted me."

Her voice grew bitter and cynical. The next moment, full of wild lamentation:

"Nobody knows how much I thought of him—nobody, only you, grandma. And now I *can't* stay here, where we were all so happy lately, and think he's so false to me. Oh, grandma, sometimes I think it can't be true that he is really gone to Europe and left no word for me."

Poor Lillie! The sobs were choking her. Mrs. Grenville could only comfort her in silence, gently stroking the wavy, pale gold hair.

"As a general principle, I do not approve of second-hand articles, Minna," said Mrs. Osborne to her daughter. "However, if you wish to buy this machine, I have no objections. Is it in perfect order? Mr. Wynde, are you a judge? I think Minna must stitch you some collars on it."

Mrs. Osborne smiled on the grave, handsome young gentleman who was Minna's escort—Mr. Oscar Wynde—whom she ardently desired for a son-in-law, and whom Miss Minna nowise discouraged in his casual attentions.

He was remarkably good looking, without being handsome; he was of very fair complexion, with the rare combination of blue eyes and ebon dark hair. Rather serious in his turn, and a little disinclined for ladies' society; very courtly when in their company, and the fortunate owner of fifty thousand dollars that an invention of his, lately patented, had yielded him on the start. Appealed to, Oscar glanced carelessly at the machine, then more attentively; then he turned to the salesman, a little flurried.

"It is finished very highly. Is it actually second-hand? Do you know who owned it?"

"I can soon tell you;" and he hastily turned over leaf after leaf of his book.

"No. 21,325, cabinet case, polished rosewood, silver mounted, complete attachments, $175 new; price $50; exchanged for Miss Lilian Ransom."

"Thank you," said Mr. Wynde. "Miss Osborne, I would hardly advise you to purchase a second-hand machine. This is a better."

And while the ladies were examining another, Mr. Wynde stepped to the salesman, and said:

"Send that one to —— street. I cannot explain now."

Perhaps Mrs. Osborne and Miss Minna noticed Oscar Wynde's preoccupied manner going homeward; if they did not, it was not because he was merry; for he was busy thinking, thinking.

So it was Lillie Ransom's sewing machine he had bought, just because he loved her yet, and yearned for something that belonged to her, false though she had been.

Was it not falsity in her? Had he not written to her an hour before he sailed for Europe, and left the letter in her mother's own hands? Had she ever written a line to the address he had left in the note? Wasn't everything unaccountably broken off?

He had been so surprised and grieved to learn, on his return, of Mrs. Ransom's sudden death, with hemorrhage of the lungs, not an hour after he had left the note to Lillie with her. He decided that in her dying moments Mrs. Ransom had obliged Lillie to give him up—though why, he could not imagine; or else that Lillie preferred a richer man than he, now that she was thrown entirely on her own resources.

All such thoughts as these were filling his brain as he walked on, having left the Osbornes in their parlor.

At his room the sewing machine was already waiting, cash payment having secured prompt delivery.

It looked so natural. How often he and Lillie had chatted over that machine; how many handkerchiefs she had hemmed for him; how often he had hidden her cotton in that self-same drawer! What! what was that? for his fingers came in contact with and brought forth his sealed letter to Lillie Ransom, written six months agone, and on the envelope was a fleck of blood!

He fairly staggered to the nearest chair. As a revelation, he understood it all as well as if he had seen it. The absence of Lillie from home when her mother had been taken ill; the consequent excitement at the event, and natural hurried thrusting of the letter into the nearest convenient receptacle; the fact of Mrs. Ransom's inability to speak after the attack, and obviously Lillie's ignorance of everything.

He forgot his own misery in contemplating what Lillie's might have been; then, without a moment's delay, drove to Grenville Farm.

After all had been explained, and the lovers sat with hand clasped in hand, Lillie remarked:

"It was so lucky that my employer wanted me to work on the —— instead of my own machine, otherwise I never should have exchanged. Oh, Oscar, wasn't that a weary six months of parting?"

But they are happy now, and Lillie has two sewing machines.

TRY HIM ONCE MORE.

BY MRS. M. A. KIDDER.

His case looks bad, I own, sir, very bad;
But let us try and save, not crush the lad;
He feels his guilt e'en to the heart's deep core:
Try him once more!

Deal with him, sir, this tender erring one,
As you would have another serve *your* son.
Youth is impatient; 'tis his first offence—
Send him not hence!

If you forgive him now, and hide his shame,
'Twill fire his heart, perhaps, to earn a name,
And show his gratitude as ne'er before:
Try him once more!

He seems a likely lad, his eye is bright,
His manly limbs are pleasant to the sight;
Let him go on, sir, still in your employ:
Pardon the boy!

Give him good counsel, in a gentle way:
Tell him the story of *your* boyhood's day;
Recount *your* victories and temptations o'er:
Try him once more!

A prison cell would never better things,
For self-respect and hope might then take wings.
You say yourself it is his first offence:
Send him not hence!

As years pass by, and he becomes a man,
Guided, it may be, by your own wise plan,
These words may greet you at life's common goal:
"*You have saved a soul.*"

* * *

THE RIVAL SISTERS.

By ELIZA A. DUPUY,

AUTHOR OF THE "EVIL GENIUS," THE "WHITE TERROR," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HESTER OFF HER GUARD.

Mrs. Oliver, Lena and Netty came in, laughing and chatting gayly together. Mrs. Oliver glanced at the disturbed face of Mrs. De Lorme, and wondered if the discussion of *her* affairs had caused the visitor to look so cold and annoyed. That any cause of vexation had arisen between Hester and her guest, she was slow to understand, for she believed that both were anxious to keep on good terms with each other, on Raymond's account.

Hester arose, and said:

"You are just in time, Marion, for there is the summons to lunch. As I have only taken a cup of coffee this morning, I am very glad to hear it. You shall sit beside me, Lena, and I will cater for you as I did in other times."

"Oh, how nice that will be!" was the gleeful response of the child. "We've had a nice time going round with Miss Marion, but I like best to be with you, my pretty Estelle."

When they gathered around the table, a degree of constraint was felt which led Hester to encourage the prattle of the child, though her mother more than once reminded her that "children should be seen, but not heard." To this, Lena at length poutingly replied:

"For all that, we manage to make ourselves heard more than grown up people. Mayn't I dance and sing, and skip about as much as I please, when I come here, Estelle?"

"Indeed you shall, my pet," was the sweet reply. "This is Liberty Hall for you, remember. You and I are old allies, you know; so you can always depend on me as your fast friend."

"I dare say you will be 'fast' in more senses than one," was the sarcastic comment of Mrs. De Lorme, spoken, however, in so low a tone that no one save Mrs. Oliver caught the sense of the words. She glanced from one to the other a little puzzled, but certain now that Hester had deeply offended her guest in something that had no reference to her affairs.

As if to confirm this conviction, Mrs. De Lorme suddenly turned to Marion, and said, with more graciousness of manner than she had hitherto shown:

"I have not congratulated you on your approaching marriage, my dear. When I give up opposition to a thing, I will not do it by halves. I think my nephew will get a faithful wife in you, Marion, and the good book tells us that the value of such a one is above rubies. Material wealth is certainly a very good thing, and I may have desired it too much for Herbert. I see now that I was wrong, for the possession of money cannot atone for the absence of that gentle submissiveness which is a woman's greatest charm;" and she darted a meaning glance at Hester, who sat perfectly impassive under the covert reproof.

Marion privately thought it a charm in which the speaker was singularly deficient, but she smiled on her, and said:

"Thank you. I shall try to be a good helpmate to Herbert, and I think we shall be very happy in our own way."

"Oh, I dare say. It will be a very humble way for a few years; but you have both made up your minds to it, and nothing more is to be said."

Lena here broke in:

"Estelle, I want you to go with me to hear that old parrot talk. He is the funniest old thing, though he uses dreadful words. Who was Blake? He ends everything he says by crying out, 'Blake's a devil, de-vil, dee-vil,' drawling the last word out in the strangest manner."

"Leona! how dare you repeat such profanity!" exclaimed Mrs. De Lorme. "I am really shocked at—"

She paused in her rebuke, for she caught a glimpse of Hester's face, and the flashing eyes, the wrathful pallor that swept over it, haunted her for many a day before she found its true solution.

For an instant Hester was incapable of commanding the fury that surged in her heart. That her mother had been very unpopular with the people over whom she had been placed for several years, she already knew; but that their hatred would take so petty a shape as this, she had never dreamed. At the moment, she felt as if she could annihilate the being who had taught the parrot to denounce Mrs. Blake in such terms, but she dared not betray the true source of the anger that blazed up within her.

She turned to Gabriel, who was the only servant in attendance, and found him with all his ivories displayed, though he was too well trained to utter a sound of mirth in the presence of his mistress and her guests. When he saw the face that was turned on him, he looked amazed and frightened, and stood helplessly hanging his lower lip.

"Who has dared to teach even a bird to utter that name in my house?" asked Hester, aware that her violent emotion must be accounted for in some plausible manner.

"I clar, Miss Estelle, I—I didn't mean no 'fence. Miss Blake used to worrit 'round me so much, dat, you see, I didn't like her, an' when she were clean gone, I teached old Poll them air words. He's a stupid old thing, an' keeps on a saying of 'em; but if you don't like it, I'll wring his neck and put an end to it."

By this time Hester had regained her composure. She said:

"No, that would be useless cruelty. The bird is not accountable for repeating what he has been taught. Send him away, for I do not wish to be reminded of—of—that person."

"Yes'm, I understan'; an' I's very sorry I teached the old thing sich bad words. I'll give him to anybody what'll take him."

Mrs. De Lorme was at a loss to understand why Hester, who had so pertinaciously defended Mrs. Blake, should become so much excited at hearing her name called in her father's house. She had spoken it with perfect calmness herself, but that was in private conversation, with no other person near to comment on its utterance, and she supposed that made all the difference. She felt more kindly disposed toward her after this outburst, and gave her credit for wishing only to do by that objectionable woman what a Quixotic sense of right suggested.

As if to test Hester's forbearance to its utmost limits, when they returned to the parlors the parrot was found in possession of the one opening from the conservatory. The door had been left ajar, and he had fluttered down from his perch and entered the room, in search of the child perhaps, who had been feeding him with bonbons from her pocket.

There he was, perched on the high back of the chair on which Hester had so lately sat, crying out in his screeching tones:

"Blake's a devil, de-vil, de-e-vil."

After running over this formula many times with rapid utterance, he added:

"Old Hage—glad you's gone—hope de devil'll cotch you—burn you to crips—ha, ha! ho, ho!" and the eldrich laughter rang through the room.

"Order Gabriel to take that wretch to the conservatory," cried Hester, to Mrs. Oliver; and putting her hands over her ears, she rushed in the direction of her own room.

She felt the necessity of being alone at least a few moments, that she might give the reins to the passion that convulsed her whole being. She locked her door, raged around the room like a caged lioness, stamping at intervals, and clenching her hands, as her white lips muttered:

"He shall pay for this! How dared he—how dared he make *her* the scoff and scorn of the place, by teaching that idiotic bird such foul words as were applied to her? He thinks he is my foster-brother, but that shall not protect him from my wrath. I will find means to make him dearly rue the insolent abuse he has taught that creature, thinking, perhaps, that it would be acceptable to the true heiress. The parrot shall not live to mock at a name that is dear to me, let the owner of it be what she may. I can easily settle *his* fate, and I have no scruples."

The thought of vengeance on the unfortunate bird seemed to calm her, for she ceased her rapid walk, and with steady hand opened a cabinet which stood in a corner of the room, in which she had placed such things as she wished to keep from Zelma's prying eyes.

A small box bound in brass was on the upper shelf, and she opened it with a curiously shaped key, which she took from the pocket of her dress. It proved to be a small medicine case which had been given to her by Macon; but in one compartment was found four vials, two of which contained the most deadly poisons, and the others held the antidotes. Why he had given Hester these things, Macon could hardly have explained himself. He had found her curious and intelligent on the subject of toxicology, and together they had experimented on cats, dogs, and other helpless creatures that happened to be at their mercy.

She took out one of the vials, went to a drawer in which she had placed a box of candy, and selecting from it a dozen sugar lozenges, she carefully touched the edge of the vial to each one, suffering an infinitesimal quantity of the deadly agent to fall upon it. Then gathering the whole in a paper, she carefully wrapped them up, and placed them in her pocket.

By this time Hester had quite recovered her composure, and she replaced the vial, locked the cabinet, and returned to the parlor, to find the obnoxious parrot removed, and quiet restored.

The two ladies had been talking amicably together of the approaching marriage of one of them, but both were thinking more of Hester's unaccountable agitation than of what they were saying. The excuse she had given scarcely satisfied either, for she had evinced no spirit of hostility toward Mrs. Blake, and both felt that the mere sound of that name could not have occasioned such violent agitation as Hester had betrayed. How to account for it was the puzzle to which they had no clue, for no suspicion of the truth had dawned upon them.

In a pause in their conversation, Mrs. De Lorme rather abruptly asked:

"Do you find Miss Landry pleasant to live with, Marion?"

The two girls had strayed into the conservatory, to which Gabriel had taken the unmannerly parrot and shut him up in his cage till he had time to remove him from the vicinity of his mistress, and the ladies were left free to speak as openly as they chose.

With perfect frankness, Mrs. Oliver replied:

"I find Estelle a most agreeable companion, and a fast friend. She has peculiarities, and I do not always understand her; but the longer I know her, the better I like her."

"I am really glad to hear you say that, for you have uncommon skill in reading character. I own that I am disappointed in her. She is quite as handsome as she promised to be, and she is wonderfully like her father, but she seems to have utterly lost the feminine softness which was her greatest charm in early girlhood. Mrs. Murray must have trained her very badly, to make her so wilful and obstinate as she has shown herself to me. After almost fighting a battle with me about that dreadful Mrs. Blake, her conduct in the dining-room was inexplicable."

"It was singular," said Mrs. Oliver slowly, "but Estelle cannot be judged by ordinary rules. I think she is a creature of impulse, and although she has stood by Mrs. Blake and guarded her interests almost as if they were her own, her true feeling toward the woman came out in an unguarded moment. I believe her name to be as odious to her, as it is to you or me."

"I hope it is, but I don't know what to think. I really wish that things had not gone so far with her and Ray. In a worldly sense, she will be a fine match for him; but I begin to think that something besides money is necessary to a really happy marriage."

"I fully agree with your last statement, Mrs. De Lorme; but with reference to Estelle and your son, I think you are tormenting yourself unnecessarily. They are devotedly attached to each other, and if a match ever promised fairly, I am sure the one they contemplate does. When you know your future daughter-in-law better, you will appreciate her more highly, I am sure."

"I can only hope that you are right, my dear; but do you know there is a singular lack of warmth in all you say of this young girl? You seem unconsciously to be measuring your words, and giving her exactly what you believe to be her due, without any effusion on your part. That is not like you, Marion, for I remember how enthusiastic a friend you can be, to one you really like with all your heart."

Mrs. Oliver flushed deeply, and hurriedly said:

"Then I must be very ungrateful, for Estelle has been the most liberal and thoughtful of friends to me. I really have a very high regard for her, Mrs. De Lorme; but I have grown older, you know, and of course I do not speak as extravagantly as I once did, of those I love. Ah, here comes Estelle, looking as unruffled as if nothing had happened to disturb her. I am glad to see that she has quite recovered from her agitation."

"I would give a great deal to understand the cause of it," muttered Mrs. De Lorme, as Hester came toward them with a deprecating smile upon her face. In her most graceful manner she said:

"I am afraid that you thought me very rude to rush away as unceremoniously as I did, but I have an aversion to parrots, and with good cause, for one belonging to my aunt bit me severely once. I dare say I was very silly to speak as I did to Gabriel, and you must both think it strange that I should betray such anger about the indignity that has been put on Mrs. Blake; but I cannot forget the affection my father once felt for her, and she was really so kind to me when I was thrown on her compassion, that I cannot condemn her utterly, let others do as they will. It is really very painful to me to hear the sound of her name, often as I have been compelled to call it of late, and I was ungovernably angry at finding that my own servants had taught an irresponsible creature to ring such changes upon it. Hark! there is that wretch screaming it out again!"

The door of the conservatory had been imperfectly closed, and the voice of the doomed bird came rolling through the opening, varying his words slightly, but the burden of them still was, that Mrs. Blake was a devil who deserved to be burned to a crisp.

Mrs. Oliver moved across the parlor for the purpose of shutting out the unwelcome sounds, but Hester made a hasty gesture, and said:

"Do not take that trouble, Marion; I have recovered from my dread of the creature, and I am going in to join the girls presently. Gabriel has put him in his cage, of course, and there is nothing to fear from him, except his profanity. As that is exercised on the person Mrs. De Lorme thinks my greatest enemy, I ought not to shrink from listening to it once at least. I do not wish either of you to think me foolishly sensitive about that unfortunate woman, for she is nothing more to me than a person who has been bequeathed to my compassion by one whose highest wish I am bound to respect."

"I beg that you will do nothing that is disagreeable to you on my account," said Mrs. De Lorme, in her most stately manner. "What I may think or feel can be of little importance to you, Estelle, after what has passed between us to-day."

"On the contrary, it is of vital consequence to *me*, that I shall be on the best terms with you, Mrs. De Lorme. I hoped that I had made my peace with you, after our slight disagreement on a painful subject, and that we were henceforth to be good friends till the time comes when we shall be something more to each other than that."

She said this in her most winning manner, and Mrs. De Lorme relaxed a little, in spite of the chafed and angry feelings that still existed toward the speaker. She less coldly said:

"I wish to feel warmly and tenderly toward you, Estelle, and it will be your own fault if we do not remain good friends. I shall speak no more on the disagreeable subject we discussed to-day, and I trust that no other cause of disagreement will arise between us."

"If it depends on me, I am sure I shall do all that is in my power to deserve that you shall feel kindly toward me. I am but a young and motherless girl, and your maternal heart will induce you to make allowances for such faults as you may observe in me. With your kind advice, I hope in time to eradicate them, for I wish to be a model wife to Ray, and a good daughter to you."

This was touching Mrs. De Lorme on her weakest point, and she thawed visibly beneath the gently spoken words.

"I give up the one point on which we differed; and if you will be guided by me in other respects, I shall have no cause to regret the choice my son has made," she replied, almost affectionately.

"Stupid old thing!" thought Hester. "I'll show her who is to rule when once I am Raymond's wife." But she said:

"It will be the ambition of my life to gain your approbation, dear Madam, and in time you will learn to love me as I wish to be loved by the mother of my darling Ray."

Mrs. De Lorme had risen from her seat to ascertain if her carriage had come to the door, for she was nervous, and restlessly anxious to get back to her own home: why, she could scarcely have explained, for she had come to Le Bocage with the half-formed intention to spend the day there, if its mistress pressed her to do so; but, in spite of Hester's neatly turned phrases, she began to feel a vague repulsion toward her, and to mistrust her sincerity, and she wished to escape from her presence that she might think over alone all that had passed that day, and try to reconcile the apparent contradiction in the nature of the girl who was to be so closely connected with her in the time to come. In spite of this feeling, a sudden impulse led her to draw near Hester and throw her arm caressingly over her shoulder, and she stooped and kissed her on the lips which had just uttered such false words.

"I accept you on trust, my dear, and I shall learn to love you as if you were my own child, when once you are Raymond's loving and true wife. I must summon the children now, for I must return home to fill an engagement I had almost forgotten."

"I am sorry for that. I had hoped that you would spend the day with me. It would afford me much pleasure if you could do so."

Mrs. De Lorme noted the words, and the manner in which they were uttered, and she hastily said:

"Thank you; but I cannot possibly remain. Will you ring for Zulieme to bring my things, if you please, Marion."

Mrs. Oliver had taken up a book, and seemed to be buried in its pages while the two had been talking together, but she arose now and rang the bell with alacrity. She thought it best for Mrs. De Lorme to go while peace lasted. If she remained through the day, Marion could not foresee what might happen, for she had no faith in the good feeling which had been so freely expressed. She blamed herself for Hester's coldness toward her guest, unconscious that the bitter grudge had any deeper foundation, and she was anxious for Mrs. De Lorme to get away before the hollow truce was broken.

Hester said:

"Since you positively refuse to stay and brighten our solitude for a few hours, I will go myself and tell the girls that you are waiting for them. I wish to hear Lena and the parrot chattering together, before he is finally taken away."

"Tell Nettie to come to me at once, if you please," said Mrs. De Lorme, as her hostess disappeared through the door of the conservatory. Then turning to Mrs. Oliver, she added, "After all the fuss she made about the stupid chatter of that bird, she has gone in to listen to it again. She is an enigma to me, Marion, but I hope I shall understand her yet."

"Of course you will, when you have learned to know her better."

Annette joined them at that moment, and Zulieme came in with bonnets and shawls.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE OFFENDING PARROT'S FATE.

In the mean time Hester remained in the conservatory with Lena, with no one else to comment on what she might do. At the farthest end of it hung the cage of the parrot, and his hooked beak was thrust through its wires, as if awaiting a further supply of the dainties with which the child had been feeding him.

"Poor Poll's hongry, h-o-n-gry—give sugar," he whined in the automaton-like tones which had been taught him.

"You are a greedy old stupid—that's what you are," said Lena. "You have eaten all the bonbons I had in my pocket, and I've got no more for you."

"Here is a fresh supply, if you would like to give them to him," said Hester, drawing two of the prepared condiments from her pocket and offering one of them to the child. "You can feed him with this, if you choose."

"Oh, how nice this looks! I am almost tempted to eat it myself."

For an instant Hester's heart almost ceased beating, but she retained control over herself, and said:

"I have plenty more nicer than these, and I will give you a box half filled before you go away; but it would be a pity to defraud the poor bird of the few I have here with me."

"Well, I won't be greedy enough to take his share and my own too," and she held up the lozenge to the expectant parrot.

Hester supplied her with them as long as they lasted, talking pleasantly and amusingly to the unconscious agent of her will; but she watched the bird keenly, and when she saw him begin to shiver and open his beak as if for air, she turned the child hastily away, saying:

"Your mother will be annoyed that I have detained you so long with my nonsense. Let us run now, little one, that you may escape a scolding. Mamma don't like to wait, you know."

Lena was quite aware of that fact, and she hurried away, clinging to Hester's hand. Before they reached the door opening into the parlor, the parrot shrieked out his last words: "Blake's a deevil, and you're another!" and fell dead on the floor of his cage.

His slayer exultingly thought:

"You have uttered your last insulting words about one I love, and I will find means to deal with him who taught them to you, if I can do so without compromising myself."

They rejoined the others, and now that Hester was certain that Mrs. De Lorme would return home, she was most gracious in her manner, and sweetly expressed her regrets. Nettie said:

"You will come to us and spend the day very soon, will you not, Estelle? We are such old friends, you know, that we have the right to claim you."

"And I shall be most happy to see Oaklands again. But why must *you* go, Nettie? I wish your mother would consent to leave both you and Lena here with us to-day. Can you not do so, Mrs. De Lorme?"

The proposal came opportunely, for that lady desired solitude for the next few hours, that she might think over her new impressions of her future daughter-in-law, and she hesitated but a moment before she said:

"As the children seem to wish it, I will allow them to stay till evening. I will drive over for them then myself."

"Oh, thank you, dear—*mother!*" and the fair hypocrite put up her lips to be kissed. Mrs. De Lorme gave the caress that was expected, though she did it so coldly that her eldest daughter noticed it, and whispered:

"Oh, mamma! I hope you are not offended with darling Estelle."

Mrs. De Lorme did not choose to notice the words. She only said:

"I shall come over for you at five o'clock, and do not keep me waiting, for I shall not get out of the carriage." Then turning to Hester: "I am very busy settling accounts with my agent, and for the next three days I shall not see any one; but on the fourth one I hope that you will come over to Oaklands and dine with me. Of course it will be only a family party, but we will do the best we can to cheer you up and amuse you."

"Thank you. I will come to *you*, though, for the present, I intend to lead a very retired life."

"That is quite right, but we must not allow you to stagnate. When you come to me we will talk of your affairs, and settle who is to live with you when Marion leaves. You must have a suitable companion, and I know a lady that I can recommend."

Hester would not show the annoyance she felt; she smilingly said:

"Your friend is, I am sure, all that can be desired; but I think I shall go to New Orleans with Marion, and pass the winter there."

"Ah, indeed! then your plans have been settled without reference to me. I will not attempt to interfere with them in any way. Good-morning. Will you come down the steps with me, Marion? I have something to say to you in private."

Wondering what it could be, Mrs. Oliver went into the yard with her. Mrs. De Lorme paused at the foot of the steps, and in a low, but emphatic voice, said:

"Estelle Landry shall not marry my son. I am resolved on that. When she goes away with you, find some one to make her forget him, and I will forgive your marriage with Herbert, and be a good friend to both of you."

She abruptly passed on, got into her carriage, and ordered the coachman to drive home as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Oliver was much astonished at this abrupt declaration, but she knew Mrs. De Lorme too well to attach much importance to it. She could be persistent enough where the interests of her own family were at stake, and Marion believed that the advantages of the marriage which had been agreed on were too palpable to her worldly mind to allow her to oppose it, after she had time for reflection.

Hester glanced inquiringly at her when she rejoined the others on the gallery, but no communication could take place between them in the presence of Annette.

Lena had slipped away to return to the parrot, and at that moment a great cry was heard from the conservatory.

"No doubt that spiteful bird has bitten her," exclaimed Hester, with well-acted dismay; and the three hurried into the house, to find Lena crying bitterly in the hall.

Lena's sister flew to her side, and hurriedly asked:

"Are you hurt, dear? Did you put your poor little fingers in the cage? That was very thoughtless."

"He hasn't hurt me, and he will never bite anything again. He—he's dead," sobbed the child.

"Dead! Impossible! What can have killed him?" said Hester. "He may only be choked with something he tried to swallow too quickly. You know you said he was a greedy thing, Lena. Let us go and look after the poor fellow."

They all went into the conservatory, and found poor Jumbo lying on his back, with his wings outstretched, and his claws curved in the agony of the death struggle. Hester's eyes gleamed as she looked on him and thought:

"If I had the power, every enemy of *hers* and *mine* should perish in the same manner."

Mrs. Oliver caught the look, and wondered what it meant; but it was gone in a moment, and with apparent regret, Hester said:

"I am afraid you are right, Lena; the bird is dead. We must have given him too many bonbons, and he was not used to such dainty food."

"*Mine* did not hurt him; it must have been those you gave me, Estelle, for he was well when I offered them to him," said Lena, with a sort of agony in her tones which seemed to deprecate the idea that *she* could have been the minister of fate to the parrot.

Hester could have struck her for making this assertion, but she calmly said:

"He had eaten as much as was good for him before I unfortunately came in, and gave you more. You shall test the harmlessness of the candy yourself, for I have promised to give you all that is left of it. Come, you need not cry, my dear; it is only a mischievous bird, after all, that has perished, and we have turkies and chickens killed every day for our own use."

"Yes; but this is different, and I tempted him to eat more than he ought. Do you remember what he said as we were going out? I am afraid he meant me when he cried out, 'Blake's a devil, and you're another.' Oh! oh! it's dreadful to think of!"

"Then don't think of it, dear. If you would like to have a parrot for yourself, I'll write to Herbert to send me one that has been better taught than this one was. As soon as it comes I will send it over to you."

Lena brightened a moment, but she sadly said:

"Ma won't have one on the place; and if I had one, may be I'd poison him with sweets, as I have this one. Thank you all the same, Estelle, but you need not trouble my cousin about it."

"Very well, little one; but *you* did not hurt the bird—he has evidently choked himself trying to swallow too greedily. Let us go away, and leave Gabriel to perform his funeral rites."

Several of the servants had gathered in the conservatory at the sound of Lena's outcry, and among them were Zulieme and her son. In a few moments they were left alone with the unfortunate parrot, which had been an especial pet with both of them. The youth said:

"Jumbo was as well dis morning as he ever was in his life, an' I don't b'lieve dat sugar things killed him, 'less dey had suffin put on 'em as hadn't no business to be on 'em. De young mistis have got rid of him now, sure 'nuff, but *I* can't see why she should be 'fended kase he cussed dat Blake 'oman. She 'zarved it right well, as *you* knows, mammy."

"Hush, Gabriel; such talk as that is dangerous. Miss Estelle would never forgive you for hinting that she had anything to do with the parrot's death. He's gone, and all you've got to do is to bury him, and hold your tongue. It's apt to run too fast sometimes."

"I s'pose I may talk to *you*, any how, an' tell you what I seed myself. I were comin' arter the poor ole feller, to take him out'n de way, when I foun' dat Miss Estelle an' de little gal was in here. I was feared she'd come down on me agin for teachin' him bad manners, an' I slipped behind de door what leads in de garden. Well, I seen her take dem round candy things out'n her pocket an' give 'em to Miss Lena, an' she fed him with 'em. Torectly he began to flutter his wings mightily, and Miss Estelle made the child run away to her ma afore he keeled over. She meant to kill him—I know she did."

"If you knew Jumbo was dead, why did you leave Miss Lena to find it out? You might have taken him away, and no one need have known anything about it."

"An' have had everybody on de place say dat *I* had killed him, jest to curry favor wi' de young mistis! I wouldn't ha' bin s'pected of sich, for nothing in de worl'!"

"No, I know you wouldn't. But it's no use talkin'. You've spent a great deal of time teachin' Jumbo them words, and now you see what they've brought to him, and may be they'll bring no good to you. White folks is mighty onsartin, as we colored ones know, an' Miss Estelle is so different from what she was when she went away, that nobody can tell what may happen."

"I an't afeard o' her bein' ha'sh to me, kase I's her foster-brother, you know, an' you nussed her."

"May be she'll remember that, but I don't know. Go now and bury the parrot before you're wantin' for somethin' else." And Zulieme sighed heavily over the conviction that the child she had loved so tenderly had little kind feeling for her or hers.

In spite of the shock her tender feelings had received, Lena soon brightened up, and spent a very pleasant day. Hester devoted herself to her amusement, and after dinner was over, the box of bonbons was brought out, and they all partook of them, without any evil results of course, and the half-formed doubt which had found entrance into Mrs. Oliver's mind was dissipated. After all Hester's kindness to her, she felt as if she was almost a traitor to harbor for a moment the suspicion that the death of the parrot had been the result of anything save a natural cause.

Late in the afternoon, Mrs. De Lorme came over, looking more friendly than when she had taken her leave. She found the little party walking in the yard, and Hester stood beside the door of the carriage a few moments and talked with her so pleasantly, that she began to think that after all it might be as well to let the marriage go on.

When the carriage rolled away, Hester turned quickly to Mrs. Oliver, and laughingly asked:

"Now then, what was the private talk about, this morning? Make a clean breast of it, Marion, for I know it concerned me."

"Oh, it was nonsense; and she has already changed her mind. I saw that, from her manner just now."

"But what did she *say?* that is what I wish to know."

"Nothing that you need care about."

"But I do care, and I can guess it for myself. She is piqued with me, and she wants you to help break off the match with Ray. Isn't that the truth now?"

"Then you overheard her. If you did, you need not ask me."

"My ears are very keen, as well as my wits. If that is what my respected mother-in-law wishes, she may as well give up her chances. I can snap my fingers at her, and defy her to take Raymond from me. Death alone shall sever us now."

"You speak very confidently, Estelle."

"I have the right to speak so, *ma chère*, as you would admit if I could give you my entire confidence. Let us take a stroll on the levee, and have a look at the father of waters. It will help to pass away the time, and I am afraid that we shall be very dull without Herbert."

Marion sighed lightly, but she said, with a smile:

"We will be such a wise pair of owls that we will not let him suspect that, at any rate."

"That was a nice comparison for two beauties, I must say. But Herbert is such a darling fellow that he may say what he pleases, and hope to be forgiven. Heigh-ho! I hope something will happen to break the monotony of the time that's coming, that will be more pleasant than a day at Oaklands spent in being lectured by my dear mamma. I don't think I can stand her long, and I shall make Ray take me to Europe as soon as we are married. Once there, I think he will have to use his marital authority if he ever gets me back to this prosaic country."

"I think, if Mrs. De Lorme heard *that*, she would try her strength against you."

"Only to meet an ignominious defeat, my dear. But there comes old Gumbo from the post-office, and I am most anxious to hear from Aunt Murray and my darling Clarice. Let us go in at once, for I hope he brings me good news."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

* * *

SPRIGGLES INVESTS.

Not long since Spriggles, on his way to Newark, took passage by the Jersey City Ferry. He had taken his seat in the gent.'s cabin of the boat, and had opened his newspaper and composed himself, when a youthful vender of the "Morning-Star Patent-Leather Polish" hailed him. It chanced that Spriggles had on a pair of patent-leathers; and it also chanced that they were considerably soiled; but he did not wish to purchase.

"Only twenty-five cents a box," plead the boy. "It'll make yer boots shine like a cat's eye in a dark cellar!—It cleans leather, an' puts on a polish onto anything that ever wants a polish. It'll polish yer manners, and when it comes to the pinch ye can put a polish onto yer boots that'll light yer way in the dark like a lantern.—Won't ye have a box, sir?—only twenty-five cents."

"No," persisted Spriggles. "I don't want it. Go 'way! D'ye s'pose I polish my own boots?"

"Just let me show ye how it works. It won't cost ye nothin' for that much." And thus speaking the lad opened a little oval wooden box, about as large as a hickory nut, which was filled with a greenish-hued waxen compound; and having knelt down, and lifted one of Spriggles' feet to his lap, he first removed the loose dirt from the boot, and then, with a bit of flannel rag dipped into the wax, he proceeded to put a polish upon the patent leather which was a marvel to behold.

"Look at that, sir!" cried the boy, arising triumphantly from his work. "What d'ye think o' that for polish?—Only twenty-five cents a box,—three boxes for fifty cents. *Won't* you take the three boxes, sir?"

Spriggles looked down at his boots, and he began to feel something biting his ear. Many of the passengers were smiling. One of his boots gleamed like a huge black diamond, while the other, by contrast, looked foul and filthy. Spriggles was not entirely verdant—not so verdant but that he saw that the boy had stolen a march upon him. No use to ask the little rascal to polish the other boot without an equivalent,—and certainly no use to fret or swear.

"Will ye have the three boxes for fifty cents?"

"Yes,—if you'll polish my other boot."

"All right! Here you are, sir.—Three of 'em!—Fifty cents, sir!"

Spriggles forked over the currency, and took the tiny boxes, and then the boy knelt, and polished the other boot.

The investment cost Spriggles a pang; but it was nevertheless a good thing for him. It gave a deeper cut to his dexter eye-tooth, and thus, perhaps, saved him from sharper practice in the time to come.

S. C., JR.

CONNUBIAL FELICITY.

BY LOUISE S. UPHAM.

For six thousand years, we've been taught to believe
That women were, all of them, born to deceive;
From cradle and boarding-school to caps and gray hair,
That verdict is flung at us all, everywhere;
And if we appeal, the judge will say, "Madam,
You have surely forgotten how Eve served old Adam!"

And this is the reason vain Discord creeps in,
And rifles the home nest of love, and love's kin:
"*The woman thou gavest* provoked me, and I—
Why, I am no angel, and needs must reply."
So the dove of sweet peace from Love's ark is driven,
And home is thenceforth—well, *not quite a heaven!*

But one husband and wife, here in "this vale of tears,"
Once lived, and they *loved*, for a score and five years!
And ne'er an unkind or a sharp-spoken word
Gave sign that by anger their bosoms were stirred.
Want entered their door, and, though windows were plenty,
Love still was their guest all those years, five and twenty.

Though the beef might be crisp, and the fish might be rare,
The coffee have dregs he'd be *too* glad to spare;
Though when in great haste for a friend or a vote,
His immaculate collar was divorced from his throat,
For the lack of a small, insignificant button,
Not a word—he was neither a churl nor a glutton.

Though his wife flourished money for "fixings and things,"
Till she looked like an angel—all but the wings—
A wonderful marvel of the dress-maker's skill,
Until one happened to glance at the *bill*,
He was calm and serene as any June morning—
No word of domestic storms ever gave warning.

And his wife? Not an angry or unpleasant word
Ever jarred on his ear when his latch-key was heard!
And though he invited a friend home to dine,
With the fare, yester's roast, served cold, without wine,
You would scarcely have guessed that she was but human,
For she wouldn't scold *then*, and she—*a woman!*

My tale is a true one, though it cannot be proved,
For the couple have—well, the old couple *moved*.
Having had, for so many long years, but one mind,
When one died, the other could not well stay behind;
But candor compels me to add, on their tomb
You can read, "*This couple were both deaf and dumb.*"

MACK.

BY MARY KYLE DALLAS.

One morning an old woman who went out begging professionally, as some other old women go out washing, found on the steps of the tenement in which she lived a dirty basket, with a dirty bit of ironing blanket in it. Peeping under this covering she saw a baby's face. It was a very young baby, and was asleep, having been drugged with laudanum, and it wore one yellow flannel petticoat and one ragged sock.

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good," said the old woman to herself. "Here I was going to borry a baby, and when you borry, you've got to pay back somehow, if it *is* only a baby; and if I don't make by this, why I can jest chuck it away agin somers. I think I will make though. Ladies' feelin's is generally touched by a grandmother and a baby."

Accordingly the sympathizing public soon saw this respectable female seated at her regular post on the steps of a public building, with the baby in her arms.

Pennies and even ten-cent stamps were evoked by the little pink face, with its mouth full of wrinkled pink fist. One or two ladies even spoke about the child to the old woman, who always replied that she was its grandmother and a widow, and that the child was an orphan. Two cents' worth of milk served for its dinner; ten cents' worth of laudanum kept it quiet for a long while. And the unfortunate little waif was kept by the old woman, and in time learned to walk, learned to fight, learned to swear; was sent out to beg by itself, and became a street boy.

The old woman died at last, and there was no one even to cuff him. He lived somehow. He earned money by an odd job now and then. He stole anything he could. He was coaxed into reformatory schools now and then, and played repentant, and had some soup. He starved, but not to death. Perhaps he was not more unhappy than any mortal must be sometimes, when with his stomach full, he lay on his back in some empty boat chained to a sunny wharf, and, rocked by the lapping waves, slept with his rag of a hat over his eyes. Sometimes he even went to the gallery of some cheap theatre and saw a play, and wished he was a "noble highwayman" hanging by his toe to a trapeze conveniently placed near a prison window, and making his escape therefrom in this elegant and theatrical manner. When he was rich enough to do that, and have pork and beans afterward, he felt perfectly content.

And there were moments when he suffered horribly—days when he had no food, nights when he slept in the streets; and he had been arrested once or twice, and had spent a certain time in jail. No one cared as much for him as its owner cared for a sick dog, the meanest, poorest and most mangy. And the few benevolent people who had made attacks on him with tracts which he could not read, and with set speeches which he scoffed at, and with offers of decent clothes if he would go to church, which he accepted, though he never crossed the church porch, gave him up at last as a bad job.

So he grew up to manhood—attained those years when, in other classes of society, fresh hopes awaken, new careers are entered upon, love begins to stir the soul—life's golden time, if poets are to be believed. Even to this muddy street creature, a little alteration came. He always had known how to smoke; he learnt by picking up cigar ends from the gutters; but when he could get it, he could drink now, also; and he had begun to understand that a woman was something to be insulted on all occasions. Always with a mouthful of tobacco, always with his chin thrust forward and his hands in his pockets; venerating one being on earth, a good fighting man; accomplished in every low vice. There stands our hero, answering for no especial reason to the name of Mack, and having no regular business or calling whatever. Yet he was not so ugly to look at. A well-shaped fellow enough, with bright eyes. Doubtless his mother was a beauty.

So more than ever good people who met him tried to reform him. For a while one or two excellent missionaries felt sure that Mack was going to "get religion." They prayed for him. They got him into church and prayed with him. He had not the slightest idea what it was all about. He went to their big room once or twice—a room in the worst part of the city, hired for the purpose of attracting the most degraded to the meetings. He used a certain power of mimicry that dwelt within him to impose upon the good folks, and really seemed more deeply moved at times than any member of the praying band. Good Dr. Walker declared that he had great hopes of him.

Alas! he ended by stealing the contribution box from under the very nose of its near-sighted guardian, and decamped with it to some unknown region, leaving on the seat he had occupied when most moved, a pack of dirty cards, arranged in the order of a finished game of *solitaire*.

"There's hope for a great many lost sheep," said old Dr. Walker, "but, I'm sorry to say, I'm afraid Satan is too strong for us with that unhappy Mack."

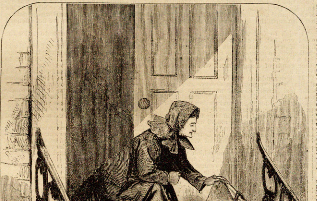
And very sorry to say and think it, Dr. Walker, the meeting being over, shook hands with his "brothers," and took the cars which were to convey him home to his pretty parsonage, his garden, his grape-vines, roses and current bushes—his study, his easy chair, and above all, his excellent little old lady of a wife.

As for our black sheep Mack, having escaped to Jersey shores, he spent his ill-gotten gains in riot as long as they lasted. Finally he gambled away the remnant at a low tavern, far out on a country road, and being discovered dead drunk and penniless at the hour of closing, was dumped out into the mud by the proprietor of the place and his assistant.

About daylight he came to his senses, and he staggered up and away; had another sleep by the roadside, and awoke again to the consciousness that he never was in a worse plight. He was in a country place. The ways and means possible to him in the city were impossible here. He had no money for fares, though he heard the shriek of a steam car hard by. He was hungry and miserable; he felt very ill too.

Lying all night in Jersey mud had given him chills and fever, though he did not know it; and though he saw a man stumbling along the road, he knew he had not strength enough to rob him, and so become that creature of his dreams, a highwayman.

So, when the sun began to glow with noontide heat, he staggered past a white cottage with a paling fence before it, and against those palings the dark green foliage of a row of current bushes, with the red fruit glistening in pendant bunches, like so many jewels.



Fevered and parched, this fruit was a wonderful joy to him. He stopped, and put out his hand and clutched a dozen of the berries. He put them to his lips.

"An't they bully!" he said, to himself. "Lord, an't they bully, when a feller is scorched dry!" and his hand went out for more, when a voice, in tones not angry, but decisive, called to him:

"Young man, let those berries alone or I'll set the dog on you. I won't have my garden robbed."

Mack looked up. There was the gentleman whom he denominated Parson Walker, looking over the fence. He knew of the stealing of that contribution box. Of course he was an enemy.

Poor Mack! he was too ill to show fight now. All his animal courage had forsaken him. His only hope was that Parson Walker would not recognize him. He could have cried for the berries like a child, but he dropped his hold on the vines, and hurried away; and making for a piece of woods not far off, tumbled down there under some trees.

Parson Walker went back to his seat on the porch, and there came to him a shrill sweet old woman's voice from the dining-room.

"Oh, Thomas, how could you?"

"What, Betsy?"

"Why, Thomas, I saw him as he passed—a poor, starving soul, if ever I saw one! I've been among the poor enough to know hunger and sickness when I see 'em. He's both; and you wouldn't let him eat a few currants—drove him away. Oh, Thomas!"

"Gracious me!" said Parson Walker. "You don't think it was hunger made him do it, Betsy?"

"I *know* it was," said the old lady.

"I thought it was just the sort of trick boys are always playing," said the old gentleman. "Betsy, I'll try to catch up with him, and if he's hungry I'll bring him back."

So away he trotted into the woods. And there, looking white and wan among the trembling shadows of the green branches, he found Mack.

His head was on his arm, and he was crying.

"My boy," said the old man, bending over him, and softened as, truth to tell, the old lady had been by the memory of a lad who had died years before, the only one who had ever called him father, "my boy, I'm afraid you are not well— Why, it's Mack!" And with the discovery came a feeling of repulsion.

The heavy eyes turned on him and checked it.

"I was dry," said Mack, "miserable, and they tasted bully. How did I know they was your'n?" and over went his face on his arm.

"My boy," said Parson Walker, "if you were hungry or thirsty, you were welcome; if you are either now—and I think you are—come home with me and have some supper. I came after you for that. I thought it was a mere thieving trick taking the currents, and I'm a little fond of my garden; but I'm Christian enough, I hope, not to drive a hungry fellow-creature from my door. Come."

Mack arose and followed the good man. He sat at the table with a white cloth upon it, and had all he wanted. The red currants were heaped on his plate, and the white bread and new milk helped the feast along. He ate in silence. Then he lifted up his head.

"Parson Walker," he said, as respectfully as he knew how, "is this any part of it?"

"Of what, my boy? of the supper?" asked the old man.

"Of Christians, of being Christians," said Mack. "Your follering me when you knowed I'd hooked that there money, and giving me things to eat and all. You said you was *Christian* enough to do it."

"What did you think Christianity was?" asked Dr. Walker curiously.

"Praying and believing a lot of things, and going to church," said Mack.

"Prayer is much, and faith is much," said the old man; "but these are not all."

And there in the gloaming, Mack listening as he never listened to good words before, the old man told the simple story of Jesus, and the boy learnt that charity and forgiveness and loving-kindness to each other, are parts of the Christian's creed.

All he said was, "I jest wish the whole world was Christians then, that's all."

I'm not sure that sudden reformations are very common, and I am not sure that this was one; but Mack, being very ill for some time, was nursed in the pretty parsonage for many weeks, and some divine power surely was at hand to soften him, and make him comprehend the beauty and the power of loving-kindness and of true Christianity; and though he never will be an elegant gentleman, he certainly leads to-day a sober and honest life, and is grateful to those who have helped him to do so. And I scarcely think Mrs. Walker is wrong when she says, that whatever other folks may think about it, she feels sure that Mack "got religion" the night they fetched him in, sick and unhappy, to have supper in the kitchen.

ANECDOTE OF DAVID CROCKETT.

The following is old, and we recollect seeing it in print years agone, but it will bear rewriting and printing over again:

David Crockett, while at Washington, visited a menagerie which opened there for exhibition, and stopping before the cage of a huge baboon he exclaimed, after gazing a while upon the grotesque quadrumana,—

"Bless me! that fellow looks exactly like Tom ——, of Alabama," naming an Honorable Member of Congress from that State then on duty in Washington.

"Sir!" sounded an indignant voice at his elbow.

Davy turned, and beheld the very member whom he had likened to the baboon, with a lady upon either arm.

"Really, sir," said Crockett, "I had no idea that you were so near. Had I known it, I shouldn't have spoken as I did."

The Honorable Member was irate, and in language slightly tinctured with threatening, demanded an apology.

"O, certainly," replied David, good-naturedly. "I am ready to apologize. Yes, yes,—but"—and he looked from the Honorable Member to the animal in the cage, and from the animal back to the Honorable Member, who, by the way, had never been deemed a handsome man,—"really, I don't know which I ought to apologize to—*you or the baboon!*" C.

SCIENCE.

Poisonous wall-paper is a fruitful source of danger to health. Green paper is commonly regarded as the most deleterious, on account of the large quantity of arsenic contained in the coloring matter. It is not generally known, however, that copper is combined with the arsenic in the green patterns, thus forming two sources of injury. But the danger is not confined to green. Arsenic is used more or less in papers of all colors. Blues have been found particularly poisonous, some of them containing a great deal of Prussian blue, the effect of which seems to be very injurious to those occupying the apartments in which it is used. A writer in the *Pall-Mall Gazette*, who says that he has had special facilities for studying this subject during the last fourteen years, asserts that arsenical wall coverings are poisoning the population by wholesale. The workmen employed to put up or remove such paper suffer severely, but conceal the fact, as its disclosure would result in their discharge.

Much scientific interest attaches to the question how far seeds are dispersed by the wind, and it is within the power of almost every resident of the country to contribute some fact within his observation, in regard to it. Mr. Alfred W. Bennett writes to *Nature*, that the idea that seeds are distributed to great distances by the wind, requires a much larger foundation of fact than it at present possesses, in order to be accepted as a scientific truth. The only fruits and seeds considerably influenced by currents of air are such as are furnished with appendages that aid flight; but on many of these, the floating apparatus is not so much to adapt them for long journeys, as to enable them to settle in lofty crevices which they cling to and clothe with vegetation.

A decisive test of the most approved pattern of iron-clad turret ships now being constructed for the British navy was recently made at Portland roads, when the turret of H. M. S. *Glatton* was fired at with 600 lb. chilled shot, from a 25 ton gun, at a range of only 200 yards. The 15 inch armor plate outside was completely pierced, but the inner lining of 14 inch teak was not penetrated. A kid, a rabbit and a hen, who were in the turret at the time of the firing, looked somewhat dazed when taken out, but sustained no injury; and the working parts of the turret were not damaged in the least. The result was regarded as exceedingly satifactory.

The Andes seem to be gradually sinking. The elevation of the city of Quito, the capital of Ecuador, has been accurately measured five times since the year 1745, and each successive measurement has shown a considerable decrease in its height above the level of the sea, the total amount of depression being two hundred and forty-six feet in one hundred and twenty-five years. During the same period, the summit of the volcano Pichincha has sunk two hundred and eighteen feet.

The beautiful constellation in the northern sky known as the Great Bear, is probably familiar to most of our readers, and many of them have probably noticed that one of its seven bright stars is much less brilliant than the others. This star is called Delta of the Great Bear. Two centuries ago, it was as conspicuous as its six companions, which are stars of the second magnitude, but since then it has gradually faded, until it is now only a fourth magnitude star.

Near the ancient city of Smyrna, in Asia Minor, is a lake occupying the crater of an extinct volcano, and said to be fathomless. It has been discovered, however, not only that it is fathomable, but that the volcano on which it rests is probably not quite extinct. Since the recent eruption of Vesuvius, the summits about the lake have been slowly sinking, and there are other indications of impending volcanic disturbances in the vicinity of Smyrna.

Professor T. Sterry Hunt of Montreal, the prominent Canadian geologist, has written a letter again expressing his dissent from the widely accepted view that the interior of the earth is fluid. He says that the powerful argument in favor of the solidity of the globe which has been advanced by Sir William Thomson is never attacked by those entertaining contrary opinions, but is simply ignored.

Perfectly pure sulphur, according to the *Gardener's Chronicle*, is almost totally ineffective as an antiseptic and remedy for blights and mildew in plants. The value of the ordinary sulphur of commerce for these purposes is due to the sulphurous acid accidentally present.

An agent deputed by the iron masters of Belgium to examine the American invention for the mechanical puddling of iron, has reported that its adoption in that country would probably result in a saving of at least one and a half millions of dollars a year.

The Marquis of Tweeddale has given five hundred dollars to the Scottish Meteorological Society, to be expended in conducting a series of experiments upon the distribution of ozone gas in the atmosphere.

A national registration of sickness is recommended by the *Food Journal* as a basis of sanitary legislation.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Justice says: "Having been a constant reader of your paper for the past twelve years, and having noticed especially your Notices to Correspondents, and believing that considerable good has resulted from the advice given therein, I write you for your opinion or advice in my case. I am a married man, with wife and five children, of whom I think as much as any mortal can. There are times when my wife abuses me publicly, and when in private her spells of abuse are without end: such as 'I wish you were dead; I wish you had died before I ever saw you,' etc. In public she is sometimes very affectionate, but very seldom, and in private her affections are as seldom displayed, but on the contrary, her fits of abuse and anger are very frequent, to such an extent that she will not let me sleep, seeming to take delight in tantalizing in every way possible. Her treatment is so humiliating, that it ofttimes leads me to tears. I love her and the children as well as anybody can, and I am sometimes almost persuaded to leave her and seek employment away from home and see if it will not better matters; but then I love to be home with my children—it seems like burying them to take myself away. There is no jealousy displayed on either side, for neither one of us have any cause for such reflections. Hope to hear from you through the columns of the *Ledger* in due time." There are unhappily some persons who are not radically bad, but who, from ill-regulated or unhappy temperament, carry themselves as you describe. Their infirmity has to be borne with and skilfully managed. You have to deal with such a case, probably; and for your own sake, and your children's, perhaps even for your wife's, your wise course is to stay at home and hold on. Probably she is fond of you even when a little "provoking." It is a way she has, and you are often to laugh it off. Men claim to be the head, you know, and women demand the right to scratch their own heads. It is their way of self-assertion. It amuses them, and a sensible man in the end is not hurt by it.

Spes (Bedford, Pa.) says: "Having read much good advice which you have given to other inquirers in your Notices to Correspondents, I concluded I would ask you a few questions in relation to life. I am a young man, twenty-two years of age; have gone through the Freshmen Class, and stood high in my recitations at college. My ambition from my youth was the legal profession. I have taken several characters in dramatic plays, and received a great many compliments from spectators and performers for the manner in which I acquitted myself. Now, I care nothing for the stage, as a tragedian or comedian, nor would I like my taste to tend in that direction. Two offers are before me for consideration, and I intend to act by your unbiased advice. The one is to take charge of a store, for half the profits; the other to read law with an intimate friend. He is a young lawyer of marked ability, and told me his education was as limited as mine, and thinks I would succeed in the profession. Now, Mr. Editor, you know we should aim high in any vocation of life; and for fear my arrow might lodge below the mark, I am undecided what to choose. Do you think I can cultivate a taste for the mercantile business? or do you think I had better at once turn my attention to law? How are my punctuation and writing? By answering these questions you will confer a favor on a great admirer of the *Ledger*." It begins to be a serious evil that too many despise store and farm and aim at a "profession." It is better every way to be a good storekeeper than a very poor lawyer, and while admitting the admirable uses to which your histrionic powers might be put at the bar, we rather incline to recommend to you mercantile life. Unless you are very sure of being a first-rate lawyer, we advise you to go to honest trade.

"Aggie Darling"—as she says her husband calls her—writes: "I want to ask you a question, and please don't think me silly. I have been married one year and seven months. I am now almost sixteen years old. I think I have a splendid husband; he is thirty-three years old. He is very good to me; gives me $25 every Saturday night, which is his weekly salary. I put all I can in the bank, of course, and he calls me lots of nice pet names, and is very kind and fond. He is never cross to me, and has never spoken an unkind word to me. He never takes the least drop of spirits, and has never left me alone an evening yet. He has bought me a nice piano, and gets me lots of books and pictures. The only fault he has is in treating me as if I was a baby. He calls me Girlie and Wifie, and all such names, as if I was very little; but I am not. I am five feet one inch in height, and he is only five feet eleven inches, and that isn't much, is it? Now please, dear *Ledger*, tell me what to do. I suppose I ought not to complain, for he is a darling any way. P. S.—Do you think the girls ought to laugh when I say *my* husband?" If this is all you have to complain of, you may as well make up your mind to be contented, and, moreover, consider yourself about the most fortunate woman living. As to the girls' laughing, perhaps they ought not to; but then would not they be satisfied to be laughed at, if they could say, in their turn, "*My* husband," of some man as amiable and good as yours?

Student (Baltimore) inquires: "1st. When there is a lady leaving a house, say nine o'clock, P. M., where she has been spending the day, is it the lady's place to ask a gentleman to escort her, if there are several gentlemen in the room at the time, and if one is a brother of the friend she has been to see, or should any one ask her the privilege to escort her? 2d. Is a young man of eighteen years of age, with a fair education, old enough to go to visit young ladies? 3d. Is a young man of eighteen years old enough to smoke, or would it be more proper to wait until twenty-one years?" 1st. An attractive young lady or a very gallant circle of young men would not admit the asking, as there would be offers enough, and a young man of tact and "snap" who wanted to escort the young lady, would manage to put things so that she could not well avoid having him, while soft youths—of eighteen or so—are sucking their thumbs in angry helplessness. 2d. He is, if the ladies will have him, and he confines his remarks to general and indifferent matters. This is a free country. But if an older and eligible man is in the way, it will not be pleasant for the youth of eighteen. 3d. More proper to wait until twenty-one. Still better to defer it till forty-two.

Don Pedro (West Philadelphia) asks: "Is there any truth in the story of the so-called deadly upas-tree of Java, that it is death for any one to approach it, and that its sap is a deadly poison?" Upas is the Malay word for poison. The real name of the celebrated upas-tree is the autjar-tree. From the milky juice of this tree, mixed with black pepper, ginger, and the juice of galanya root, the natives make a poison for arrows, which is quick in its work, and fatal. The story, however, that there is a poison vale in Java, where the upas-tree alone lives, and with its exhalations kills all other life, animal or vegetable, is untrue. There is a deadly vale in Java where nothing can live, but this is from the carbonic acid gas sent up from the ground, and there are no upas-trees in that valley. The tree grows in forests, without doing any injury to the adjoining trees; and the flesh of animals killed by the upas poison is untainted, and can be eaten with perfect immunity.

Fred Johnson (Delaware, Ill.) says: "I come to you for advice for the first time. Who should engage the minister? Secondly, should I send a carriage after the minister, or call for him in the one I go in? By answering these questions you will confer a favor on an old reader of your valuable paper." All depends on the purpose for which the minister is required. For preaching, it is usually by some proper officers of the congregation he is engaged. For a funeral, the relatives of the deceased usually communicate with the clergyman. But if you contemplate marriage, as we rather infer from the abrupt and distracted style of your letter, you had better engage him, and the gentleman who acts as your groom's-man, or a friend, can call in a carriage, and afterward hand him a (handsome) fee. We wish you self-possession, and much happiness.

S. W. W. (Milton, Iowa) says: "Please decide the following grammatical dispute: 'Forward! forever forward! I saw the sublime march.' One of our party holds that the words 'forward' in the above example, by virtue of ellipsis, are adjectives used to describe 'march.' The other holds that they are simply adverbs, and have no adjective signification whatever. Does not the use, rather than the form of a word, determine the part of speech to which it belongs?" The words thus given are obscure. If "forward" is employed to urge men on, it is used rather interjectively than otherwise. If it describes an event, and is equivalent to "progress," or "march," it is to be so regarded, on your own good principle of use determining the classification of a word.

Sergeant (Fort Laramie, Wyo. Ter.) says: "I am a sergeant in my company, and my term of service has nearly expired. Now what I wish to know is, how are the police of New York or other large cities appointed, and by whom? and would there be any possibility of my getting on some police force when discharged from the army, having an excellent recommendation as a soldier and a trustworthy man? I am a man of twenty-five years of age, six feet in height and build in proportion. If you can inform me on this subject, you would greatly oblige." In New York and many other large cities there are Police Commissioners, to whom applications have to be made. Political influence has often something to do with the appointment.

Huntington (New York) says: "I am an old subscriber of the *Ledger*, and as I have never asked you a question before, please answer the following one in your next issue. As by the laws of this State a contract made on Sunday is illegal, supposing parties cannot meet to make it on any other day but Sunday, and knowing that it is illegal, made on that day, date it the following Monday, would it not be perfectly legal?" To be duly dated, it must be witnessed, and some competent witness must sign his attestation to a lie. His decease may appear, conceivably, in Monday morning's paper, and the document makes him a witness the day after he died! It is safer to stick to the truth of things always.

F. K. says: "A gentleman of my acquaintance has a collection of American copper coins, dating from Washington's administration down to the present time; also a great number of other coins of early date. These he is desirous of selling. Will you tell me, through the columns of the *Ledger*, where I can find a market for them, and about what they are worth? Is not such a collection rare?" Such a collection is rare, and in the hands of one who knows the market for such things, it might be sold for a good price. The way to find a purchaser is to advertise the collection in the daily papers.

A Stranger says: "To all appearance the sun rises in the north-east, at midday is south of us, and sets in the north-west. Why is this the case? Please answer through the columns of your paper, greatly obliging a stranger." If it is meant why the Creator arranged things so, we do not attempt an answer. If it is meant what astronomical facts determine this arrangement, the reply will be found in the simple explanations usually prefixed to the better kind of school "geographies."

A. A. asks: "Will you kindly tell me what dress would be suitable for a young man to wear to be married in in the morning, at the bride's house, before starting on a wedding trip?" It is somewhat a matter of taste. Consult your tailor.

Hygia (New York) says: "I beg that you will be kind enough to answer the following questions through your Notices to Correspondents. I appeal to you, because I know of no one who can give me the desired information. 1. Is there a medical college in this city, or in the vicinity, which is open for afternoon or evening students, and if so, which one? I desire to study medicine, but am engaged during the day-time. 2. What books, if any, treat of the Oneida Community? I am just earning a living. I am possessed of $500, and am content only to earn my living, but I find my sedentary occupation is undermining my faculties. I should like to go somewhere where I can have scenery, and fresh air, and fresh food. 3. With a little agricultural knowledge, and the aforesaid amount, where can I go to obtain what I wish? Do not say simply, 'Go West;' but tell me, if you please, where. I should add that I am in general good health, and of moderate constitution. I beg also to say that I have read your paper for twelve years, and have never yet troubled you with any queries. Am I not, therefore, entitled to receive a little consideration? You will receive my sincere thanks for your attention to my questions." We do not know of such a college nor of such a book as you desire. You can find in Kansas, Nebraska, or California all you want, and a good farm of land besides for yourself, if you manage wisely with your five hundred dollars. The railway will carry you for a trifle to look up land, and return you that, if you buy; and there is all a man wants in those regions.

A Poor Farmer (Lincoln, Ill.) writes: "I am a poor man. I bought a team of horses on credit, and have tried hard to pay for them, but have failed to do so as yet. The men that I bought the team of are in easy circumstances, and could wait for their pay. Now what I want to know is, would it be right, as I am thinking of moving West, to go off without paying for the team, and let the men wait for their pay until I could make a raise of money enough to pay them; or would it be better to give up moving West, give up my team and go to work by the day, to try and get money enough to pay for a team, which would be a hard matter, as I scarcely make a living with my team now? If you will answer immediately, through your answers to correspondents, you will confer a lasting favor on a reader of your paper." The right course for you to pursue is this: Go to the men of whom you bought the team, inform them truthfully of your situation, consult with them as to what you had better do under the circumstances, and adopt such course as shall be mutually agreed upon between you and them. A strong man with a good team ought to be able, in a good locality, to make more than just a living. But *don't make a scoundrel of yourself by running away without paying for the horses.*

A. D. (New Jersey) writes: "I am in trouble, and come to you for advice. My husband is a drinker. Could you not tell me how I could stop that longing for drink? Would you please give me a recipe through your Notices to Correspondents that would cure the curse of intemperance. He takes spells, and then, when he is over them, he is pretty good. We have three dear children, and Oh, how it makes my heart ache whenever they see their father in such a condition! Please do not throw this in your waste basket. You would do me a great favor by giving me an answer, and oblige an old reader of your most excellent paper." If it were possible to give a recipe which would be an effectual remedy for intemperance, a boon of immeasurable value would be conferred upon the human race. Unfortunately we know of no such, except to *abstain from strong drink*, and that is of but little practical use, owing to the difficulty, and generally the impossibility of getting the patient to comply with it. Treat your husband with unfailing kindness, remonstrate affectionately with him when he is sober, and, as far as practicable, keep him out of the way of temptation.

F. A. says: "I am a young girl of sixteen summers, and have had but very little experience in the perplexities of life thus far. Please tell me what course to pursue with a young lady neighbor of mine, who has been accustomed to come in when she knows there is a young gentleman coming to spend an hour or two with me? She will come and stay till ten o'clock at night, and make no move whatever to go home, notwithstanding we give her broad hints that her room would be better than her company. She is of a good family, has a good mother, and is the nearest neighbor we have. I think a great deal of her mother, and I would not like to offend her by telling her daughter to go home, when it is a proper time for her to go. Please tell me what course to pursue, for I know you will give me good advice." You should take occasion, sometime when you and your young friend are together, to request her, in the most courteous and affectionate manner possible, not to stay late when she finds that your beau is making a call. A young lady should certainly have tact enough to manage such a matter.

A. E. (Tennessee) writes: "I am living in the country, and visited lately a city close by. While there I became acquainted and fell in love with a young lady, and, to judge from appearances, thought myself beloved in turn. We were boarding at the same house, and as I was about to leave for the country, the lady being acquainted with the fact, was it right for her to leave, on the evening previous to my departure, to visit some friends, and not come back before I left, so as to deprive me of the chance to tell her Farewell? I could not call on her at her friend's house, because I am not on good terms with them, which is known to the lady in question. I am deeply grieved at her conduct, but love her too much to give her up so soon. What ought I to do?" The circumstance which you speak of is a trifling matter, hardly worth considering. The lady may have had a previous appointment, or some other good and sufficient reason for doing as she did. Speak to her about it, and do not be too much influenced by trivial considerations in such an important affair.

H. S. P. (Half Moon Bay, Cal.) writes: "I wish you would inform me of the best method to remedy a trotting horse from interfering in the hind legs. Should the *outer* or *inner* part of the hoof, in shoeing, be trimmed the lowest? Our best shoers differ very much on this point. Please give me any other information you possess on the subject." In some cases interfering has been remedied or diminished by lowering the inside of the hoof, and in others by precisely the opposite treatment. This, in itself, however, usually proves wholly inadequate as a means of cure. As to your request to give you any other information which we possess on the subject of shoeing, to comply with it literally, would require probably one year of our time, and the publication of a large volume, with numerous illustrations, at a cost of many thousands of dollars. The horse's foot, and how to treat it, are matters not to be learned in a day or told in a minute.

A. R. (St. John, N. B.)—The number of square miles comprised by the United States before the purchase of Alaska, was three million ten thousand two hundred and seventy-seven. The population, at this time, is estimated in round numbers at forty millions. It was over thirty-eight millions when the census was taken in 1870. New York does not derive its name of the Empire State from the fact of its being the largest State in the Union. There are seventeen States, every one of which contains more square miles than New York does. It is called the Empire State because it contains more population, has more wealth, trade and commerce, and exerts more influence than any other State. California is three and a half times larger than New York, and Texas is nearly six times as large, but the entire population of either of those States is not equal to that of the city of New York alone.

A. G. F. (Maine) says: "I come to you for advice, like many others. My case is this: A friend of mine is in South Bend, Indiana, and has sent for me to come out where he is. He says it is a good place, and that a young man can do better there than he can do in the East. I have had good employment during the summer, but not in winter. My friends here tell me not to go; but I shall soon be out of employment. Would you advise a Pine-tree State boy, twenty-three years old, to go to South Bend, under the circumstances I have mentioned?" It is not likely that you would be any worse off in South Bend than you are in Maine, and the chances are that you would better your condition. You know the friend who advises you to make the change, and must judge for yourself as to the degree of reliance which you can place in his recommendation.

J. C. (Plainfield, N. J.) wishes to know why barbers' poles are always striped with red and white, and says: "Please let me know in your column of answers to correspondents what was the origin of the custom." There are various reasons given for the color and striping of the barber's pole. The best authenticated one is that some of the barbers in old times used to act as surgeons so far as to bleed people who thought it desirable to be bled, and that they adopted for their sign the pole striped with red and white, representative of an arm bandaged and stained with blood, to indicate their surgical calling. After a while, the practice of surgery by barbers died out, but the pole remained, and finally became the sign of barbers generally.

Kate Collaise (Scranton, Pa.) says: "Be pleased to inform me through your valuable paper the *Ledger*, the age at which ladies can contract marriage legally, according to the laws of the State of New York? Also, what age must ladies attain to, before they are of age, according to the above laws?" Persons attain their majority at the age of twenty-one. Unless objection is made by parents or guardians, we do not know of any age at which marriage is unlawful for young ladies, on the ground of youth. They will do well, as a rule, to wait for "full age" as the years of discretion, before they "contract marriage," or any other serious responsibility.

F. A. M. (Rockford) inquires: "In giving invitations to a party or other social gathering, should lists of those invited be furnished, and has a person a right to demand a list of them? By answering this as soon as possible, through your correspondents' column, you will do me a great favor." If you mean that a person invited should see the lists of others invited, the thing is preposterous. No one ever demanded it; and no one, we presume, would accede to the demand, if it were made. If any man treats me as a friend, he must assume that my other friends whom he will meet, are proper persons for him to meet.

G. B. Harcourt (Altoona, Pa.) asks "the population of London England, from census of 1871. As many of my friends are of an opinion that the correspondent column is merely 'got up,' please alter the opinion by answering in next issue, and you will settle a vexed question among many of your readers, and greatly oblige." The object of these "questions" is to give useful, practical information on matters of some general interest, not otherwise easily obtained. The population of London is about three millions and a quarter by the last census.

Unfortunate says: "Please inform me, through your answers to correspondents, whether an ugly scar, but not a deep one, made on the forehead, can be removed by any medical process, so it will not be observed." There is no medicine that will remove scars. Where they are not deep, time sometimes removes them, either wholly or to such an extent as lessens them beneath the point of casual observation.

J. B. C. (Boston) asks: "Would you advise discontinuing a correspondence with a lady whose parents are opposed to it?" Yes, under ordinary circumstances, until their opposition can be overcome.

⁂ *Several letters stand over to be answered in our next.*